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# An enquiry into how English for Academic Purposes practitioners construct their professional identities

Taylor, Sarah

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# An enquiry into how English for Academic Purposes practitioners construct their professional identities

by

Sarah Taylor BJourn, MA

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University of Roehampton
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**Abstract**

This thesis examines how EAP practitioners construct their professional identities in response to the meanings they attach to notions of professionalism and issues perceived to be facing the EAP profession. Although EAP has produced a substantial body of research in its short history as a profession, few studies have focused on EAP practitioners themselves, particularly in terms of their professional identities. This thesis contributes to the field by providing a rich understanding of how a group of EAP practitioners construct their own professional identity and presenting a new theoretical perspective on EAP identity in the form of key theories from Symbolic Interactionism. This methodological framework provides original insight into how practitioners' identities may be constructed in response to their own contexts and the framing of EAP identities in the literature. The study consists of in-depth interviews with 17 EAP practitioners working in the UK.

The research findings reveal practitioners who collectively view themselves as effective teachers but face tensions around positioning, marginalisation and recognition in their attempts to manage the liminal status of EAP in higher education and in barriers to maintaining this identity. This tension manifests in fragmented identities that may align with either academic or support service roles, or sometimes occupy a more liminal space. The findings also reveal practitioners who perceive themselves to be marginalised or stigmatised within the academy, and therefore engage in impression management strategies in an attempt to carve out a more stable identity for EAP. Another tension that emerges is that between conceptualisations of EAP identity in the literature and participants' own constructions of their identities. These findings have implications for the need to construct a greater shared understanding of EAP practitioner identity in order to reduce professional disarticulation.

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**Abbreviations**

| | |
|---|---|
| EAP | English for Academic Purposes |
| ESP | English for Specific Purposes |
| EFL | English as a Foreign Language |
| ELT | English Language Teaching |
| CELTA | Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| Delta | Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| EGAP | English for General Academic Purposes |
| ESAP | English for Specific Academic Purposes |
| JEAP | Journal of English for Academic Purposes |
| PIM | Professional Interest Meeting |
| TEFL | Teaching English as a Foreign Language |
| TESOL | Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| IELTS | International English Language Testing System |
| TOEFL | Test of English as a Foreign Language |
| L1 students | Students who speak English as a first language |
| L2 students | Students who do not speak English as a first language |

# CHAPTER 1: RATIONALE AND RESEARCH AIMS

## 1.1 Introduction

This study explores how English for Academic Purpose (EAP) practitioners construct their professional identities. EAP is a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001) – in turn a field of English Language Teaching (ELT) – which broadly aims to prepare learners for study or research in English (Charles and Pecorari, 2016; Hyland, 2006). It therefore plays a key role in English-medium higher education, and practitioners predominantly work in this sector. It is a relatively new practice that only began to develop as a profession in the 1960s (Jordan, 2002) and is still in the process of establishing its status (Alexander, 2010). Practitioners, therefore, may not have a clearly articulated professional identity, and this study aims to explore this EAP identity. Therefore, through an analysis of interviews with 17 practitioners in the UK, I examine how these participants construct their identities in response to the meanings they attach to notions of professional identity and to issues that the EAP profession is perceived to be facing.

This chapter outlines the professional context and the rationale behind my choice of research topic and questions. It provides a reflexive account of the meanings I attach to issues facing the profession and my own professional identity. It first explains the overall rationale of the study and then examines the context of the research and my positioning within that context. It next describes the aims of the study and presents the research questions I endeavour to answer. The final section provides an outline of the study and how this thesis is structured.

## 1.2 Rationale for the study

The rationale for this study is built on the understandings I have gained about EAP practice from the 21 years I have spent working and learning in the profession. The way in which I view my professional identity has developed over the course of my career, leading me to think more deeply about the profession. In the early stages, like many novice practitioners, I was most concerned with classroom practice and developing my professional knowledge in order to become an effective teacher. However, over the years, I have gradually developed as an EAP practitioner, both through my practice and through other forms of professional learning such as attending conferences and reading the literature, and I am now interested in a far greater range of activities around EAP. Engaging in doctoral study has also had a major impact on my professional development. During the course of the programme, I have read a great deal of literature, much of it in fields not directly within the remit of EAP, and the reading and assignments I completed during the programme cultivated my interest in professional identity and what it means for teachers in different fields and contexts. It also made me aware that, despite the issues facing EAP as a profession and EAP practitioners as professionals, their professional identity is a significantly understudied area in the EAP literature (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

My professional development has led to the formulation of a number of views about EAP and the issues I perceive the profession to be facing, some of which are those involving higher education in general, and some which are specific to, or more pronounced within, EAP. These views provoked an interest in whether other practitioners in the field shared my perspective on EAP professional identity. I therefore embarked on this thesis with particular issues in mind about which I had fairly strong ideas, and that I wanted to address in my interviews. In the following section, I will attempt to discuss my perspective on

these issues, to elucidate why, as an EAP practitioner, I feel that they are important, and to explain how these views led to my research questions. Appendix A provides further contextual details about the issues facing EAP, so here I set out my positioning in the light of that context.

### 1.3 Research context and researcher positioning

This section explains my perspective on the main issues that the profession is perceived to be facing as discussed in the EAP literature. My purpose in revealing my positioning is in order to maintain reflexivity within the study so that the relationship between my positioning and the analysis and interpretation of my data can clearly be seen. This reflexivity is in line with the principles of the qualitative methodology chosen for this study and is a means of maintaining quality and authenticity throughout the research process (King and Horrocks, 2010). This section therefore highlights what I perceive to be the main issues that emerge from the context described in Appendix A and developed further here.

In the current neoliberal economic climate, higher education has become increasingly commercialised, resulting in an intense demand for international students at English-medium universities (Hadley, 2015). In order to gain an understanding of their academic disciplines and succeed in their studies, these students need to gain fluency in academic English, which means that EAP has become an enormous industry engaged in supporting these students (Hyland, 2018). In light of its apparent importance to higher education, one might expect EAP to have acquired a certain value within academia, but the field occupies a liminal space between the academic and support service functions of higher education, in which it “has a sort of Cinderella status, and staff do less well in terms of salary,

opportunities to research and other benefits than staff in other subjects" (Charles and Pecorari, 2016:38). It is my perception that we are often marginalised within the academy and subordinated to other activities. This view is based on my own experience and interactions with others in the EAP community, but is also no doubt influenced by the tendency in the EAP literature to position the field in this way (e.g. Ding and Bruce, 2017; Fulcher, 2009; Turner, 2012). Before embarking on this study, I had believed that this was a fairly common interpretation of the positioning of EAP; however, it was clear from my interviews that not all practitioners share this view. There may be different reasons for marginalisation and ways in which it is manifested; thus, the wide variety of EAP contexts (see Appendix A) may also go some way to explaining why some practitioners feel marginalised while others do not.

One way in which we may be marginalised or subordinated is the employment contracts under which we are often employed, and the job titles we are assigned. Job titles such as 'teacher' or 'tutor' may be a deliberate attempt to 'other' us within the academy and employ us under different, usually less favourable, working contracts. This is the case in my current employment, where EAP practitioners are employed as 'teachers' with different working conditions from lecturers. This appears to have the function of labelling us as different from – and possibly inferior to – those titled 'lecturer'. Labelling can have a self-fulfilling function, separating the labelled person from certain groups and making it very difficult to escape those labels or enter the groups from which they are excluded (Becker, 1963). For example, the frequent rationale for assigning different job titles to EAP practitioners is that the contracts associated with these titles do not require the 'research activity' often demanded of lecturers (Blaj-Ward, 2014; Fulcher, 2009; Hamp-Lyons, 2011), as is the case in my current job. These 'teaching-only' contracts thus

exclude EAP practitioners from the ‘lecturer’ group making it difficult to engage in the same research practices and thereby enter that group.

These contracts and titles also have the function of relegating us to a more technical role in which ‘informed practice’ does not seem to be encouraged to the same extent as if we were able to inform our practice with research (Ding and Bruce, 2017), and means we are obliged to engage in this activity in our free time – a difficult task in the light of our often heavy teaching loads. Another obstacle is that access to funding for this activity is not always available (Ding and Bruce, 2017). Although I receive funding for professional development in my current role, I am not allocated time for scholarly activity as part of my contract, the expectation being that professional development will take place on my own time, as seems to be the experience of many in the field (Hamp-Lyons, 2011).

Some voices in the field do not identify with the title of ‘lecturer’ because they associate this word with a model of teaching that does not represent their pedagogical views. This argument resonates with me, as I position my own identity as that of a teacher; however, I would argue that in higher education today the job title of lecturer indicates an academic status rather than a teaching philosophy. In this study, I use the term ‘practitioner’ so as to avoid this contested nomenclature but also to indicate that, although the main role of most EAP practitioners is teaching, they also engage in other academic activities (Charles and Pecorari, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017).

From my perspective, all university teachers should ideally have the same job titles, and EAP practitioners should be awarded time to engage in scholarship. I believe that EAP is an academic activity, and that scholarly activity and scholarship are essential aspects of

the EAP role. This does not necessarily mean 'REFable' (Research Excellence Framework, 2019) research, but should involve opportunities to present at conferences and conduct small studies. Practitioners should also receive time and funding for scholarly activity such as attending conferences. EAP requires quite a broad professional knowledge base, and a deep understanding of the complexities of acquiring discourse competence, so it is important for practitioners to regularly engage in scholarly activity in order to develop their professional practices (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

Another manifestation of the 'othering' function is the administrative positioning of EAP departments within non-academic support or service units (Hamp-Lyons, 2011) and the construction of practitioners "as language experts rather than academics" (Burke and Hermerschmidt, 2005:348). Designating EAP a 'service' or 'support' unit subordinates practitioners to a position beneath the more mainstream 'lecturers' and seems to undermine their function by relegating them to a role in which they 'serve' the lecturers (Benesch, 2001) and "'mop up' the problems of academic literacy […] as invisibly as possible" (Turner, 1999:64). This can have a detrimental effect on students, who thereby see EAP as remedial, or less important, and may therefore be disinclined to engage in our programmes. It may also reduce communication between EAP practitioners and other university teachers, making it difficult for us to support students appropriately (Starfield, 2001). This lack of communication may also contribute to a reduced understanding of the nature of EAP within academia. Academics may view the EAP unit as a place to which struggling students can be despatched in order to have their problems 'fixed' (Wingate, 2012), much like other services such as counselling or the accommodation office, rather than viewing EAP as an integral part of their students' development. I do not necessarily believe that other academics view us as inferior *per se*, but rather as something separate

from the students' main academic activity. They may, therefore, not see the value in collaborating with EAP staff.

In an ideal world, I would like to see EAP established as its own academic discipline located in an academic department with practitioners specialising in English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) − EAP provision that is situated within the discourses of specific disciplines. I would also like to see less 'othering' of practitioners through job titles, contracts and the positioning of EAP as a support service, as I feel it would be easier to create collaborative relationships and develop our professional knowledge if we were not distanced from academia in this way. My experiences as a practitioner suggest the lack of understanding within higher education of what EAP involves contributes to our marginalisation. Therefore, greater communication and a better understanding of what we do are both vital in integrating EAP further and creating a more collaborative environment.

A symptom, and perhaps also a cause, of the othering of EAP in higher education is that EAP departments are often viewed in terms of their ability to generate income, resulting in a 'bums on seats' mentality within the administrative areas of universities. Although their ostensible purpose is to support students who do not speak English as a first language (hereafter L2 students), EAP units are often viewed as cash cows by universities, particularly those Hadley describes as "sausage makers" (2015:34) which have a very neoliberal model of education. Teachers in these types of institution tend to be very tightly managed and in these (and many other) universities, international students are seen as a source of income (Hadley, 2015).

Viewing EAP as a source of income and a means of recruiting international students may be an issue for EAP programmes, as they may be pressured to lower their entry requirements for foundation and pre-sessional programmes in order to recruit greater numbers of students, or to massage exit grades in order to ensure that more students continue on to their degree programmes. As Hadley (2015) argues, this income-generation model also forces EAP departments to follow standardised procedures in order to 'process' as many students as possible. The lowest number of teachers possible are employed and provided with prescribed materials to teach, reducing them to a technical, non-expert role which serves to further marginalise them within the academy and undermine their professional knowledge.

A prevailing view in the literature, perhaps justified by some research findings (e.g. Fulcher, 2009), is that private providers pose a threat to EAP because they often employ practitioners under inferior working conditions, offer limited opportunities for development, and cause EAP practitioners to feel isolated from the profession and the academy (Fulcher, 2009). Privatisation seems to be an undesirable development in EAP in the sense that it emphasises income-generation over education, which is likely to have negative consequences for students, EAP practitioners and universities. However, as discussed in Appendix A, many public universities today appear to be operating under the same principle (Giroux, 2014; Hadley, 2015) and some private companies do appear to be attempting to run reputable businesses that treat their staff well and have some integrity with regard to their students. Therefore, positioning privatisation as a particular threat to EAP may be oversimplifying matters.

The features of our professional knowledge and how it might be obtained and demonstrated are frequently discussed in the EAP literature. In academia, lecturers tend to have PhDs, or at least master's degrees, that demonstrate their knowledge of a particular subject area. Professional knowledge and qualifications are different things, but they do overlap to an extent in terms of the issues they present. In EAP, practitioners enter the profession from a variety of backgrounds, but a frequent career progression route is from EFL teaching to EAP (Bell, 2016; Campion, 2016), as was my experience. This raises questions of what practitioners should be expected to know when joining the profession, and how they should demonstrate that knowledge. Currently it is common for universities to require practitioners to hold an English Language Teaching (ELT) qualification – usually the Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Delta) or sometimes the lower-level Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) – and a postgraduate degree, but sometimes lower qualifications are accepted, particularly when they are recruiting for summer pre-sessional courses. The issue is that neither of these qualifications may be seen to sufficiently prepare practitioners to teach EAP (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

ELT qualifications provide some training in pedagogy and linguistic knowledge, and undergraduate or postgraduate study gives practitioners an understanding of how academia works, but there seems to be a lack of connection between the two. EAP practitioners tend to gain knowledge of academic discourses by 'osmosis' through working in academia and to an extent through further professional development, but it seems to me that this is too complex and important an area to be left to random on-the-job learning. I did acquire the bulk of my professional knowledge on the job, but I was extremely lucky to have completed both my DTEFLA (the previous incarnation of the

Delta) and my master's in university departments in which I worked as an EAP teacher, and to have had extremely supportive managers in the early stages of my career, which other practitioners may not experience. There is, therefore, an argument to be made for a specific EAP qualification. Having said that, the majority of EAP practitioners appear to have acquired their professional knowledge without one, as exemplified in Bell's (2016) study. He interviewed well-known figures in EAP about their experiences and beliefs regarding how EAP should develop. Despite most being in favour of an EAP-specific qualification, his interviewees all described how they had entered EAP without one. This may seem paradoxical, but I feel that my career development would have been easier with some EAP-specific training prior to working in EAP. Although qualifications are merely used for entry to professions, I think that EAP's lack of any formalised qualification makes it harder to assert our professional standing in an environment in which qualifications are indicators of status. I believe that formal pre-employment training in EAP would be useful for new practitioners and help provide a foundation for further professional learning.

The scholarship of EAP has increased significantly in recent years (Hyland, 2012), and I believe this is important for the profession. My decision to embark on an EdD programme has impacted significantly on my identity. The extent to which I have grown – as an academic and a teacher – through the course of my doctoral study suggests to me that this level of study is very valuable for EAP practitioners. The needs of our students are complex, and the greater our knowledge of academia, the better equipped we are to meet those needs. Therefore, I would argue that in order to develop as a profession, EAP needs more of its practitioners to engage in doctoral study, both to inform the discipline and their own professional knowledge, and to increase the cultural capital of EAP within

universities (Ding and Bruce, 2017) and thereby reduce its marginalised status. However, some participants in this study did not see the value of PhD study for EAP practitioners. They appeared to emphasise the teaching aspect of the EAP role and did not see how doctoral study could inform their practice. Although I feel that doctoral study has informed my teaching to a large degree, I understand their position, and would, on reflection, perhaps argue that there is space for a range of roles in EAP, from more teaching-focused to more research-focused.

Professional engagement in communities of practice is also important for the profession. The universities at which I have worked in the UK have all been institutional members of BALEAP (our only global professional organisation), which has made it easier for me to attend conferences and to access literature published in academic journals such as the Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP). This has greatly improved my professional development opportunities, and I consider my engagement with the community to have been instrumental in the formulation of my views about the EAP profession and the direction I believe it should take.

In summary, I have constructed my identity as that of an academic and would like EAP to be viewed as a field of academic study (Ding and Bruce, 2017), a position it does not currently appear to occupy. I see EAP as operating on the margins of academia in support departments where practitioners are othered by means of job titles and lack of access to scholarship and professional development, and I would like the profession to become more mainstream and integrated into academic departments, where it can be a more effective tool in the education of students. This requires change at a more fundamental level, but issues like job titles and positioning EAP in non-academic departments are

symptoms of this marginalisation that, if changed, should have some effect on how we are viewed in the academy. I also believe that the profession needs to do all it can to counter the model of EAP as predominantly a source of revenue, as this model is likely to have negative effects on students, practitioners and universities as a whole.

However, the shift towards a more neoliberal model of higher education has also affected traditional academics, who face increasing deprofessionalisation in the form of temporary contracts, teaching-only positions, and fewer opportunities for professional development. This has resulted in a very uncertain academic environment and no longer offers EAP practitioners a clear academic model to aspire to. Therefore, although it is tempting to argue for a model of EAP that is more in line with traditional academic activities, this may be unachievable in the current climate. Furthermore, this context may influence the meanings other practitioners attach to the issues discussed above and how they construct their identities. Thus, there seems to be a need for greater discussion within EAP about who we are and how we need to move forward as a profession, and this discussion needs to involve practitioners working at the chalkface, not just those who have managed to carve out a position as published academics in EAP.

### 1.4 Research aims and questions

The EAP literature surfaces the tensions around the disparate nature of the profession, and the lack of research into practitioner identity from the perspective of practitioners themselves, which means that views across the field may differ widely, and that the EAP identities presented in the literature may not reflect how practitioners identify themselves. Therefore, my aim is to gain an understanding of how practitioners position themselves within these debates and reveal their own identities. The main question this study aims to

address, therefore, is: how do EAP practitioners construct their professional identity? I address this main question through the following research questions:

RQ1: What meanings do practitioners attach to notions of professional identity, and how do they construct their own identities in response to these interpretations?
RQ2: How do the meanings practitioners attach to issues discussed in the EAP literature influence how they construct their identities?
RQ3: What implications do these identity constructions appear to have for practitioners and for the profession?

As these questions suggest, I am attempting to understand EAP practitioner identity within a social context – in other words, how practitioners construct their identities in response to others. Research into this understanding requires a constructivist ontological position that views realities as dynamic and constructed (Bryman, 2012) in relation to groups and "the process of individual identification or nonidentification with the group" (Varghese *et al*, 2005:39). This view of identities as constructed through social interaction, and based on individuals' interpretations of the world, requires an interpretivist research paradigm. Therefore, I draw on Symbolic Interactionism as a theoretical approach that focuses on the self (Adams and Marshall, 1996) while viewing the construction of identities as essentially social in nature (Blumer, 1969) and developed through shared meanings (Pascale, 2011). I have selected several theories from within this approach that appear to be helpful in shedding light on how identities are constructed. These theories will be reviewed in Chapter 3, and I will illustrate how they may be used to explore EAP professional identity.

## 1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1 has presented an overview of the study, including its rationale and researcher positioning within debates related to EAP's liminal status in higher education, its professional knowledge structures, and scholarship within the field. This chapter has also presented the aims and questions of this research. Chapter 2 provides a critical review of the literature around professional and EAP practitioner identities. It positions EAP within conceptualisations of the professions and evaluates their relevance to EAP. It also examines literature on the professional knowledge and scholarship of EAP. It primarily argues that, despite the significant issues facing the profession and impacting on the identity of practitioners, there is a significant gap in the literature with regard to the meanings EAP practitioners attach to these issues and how they construct their own identities.

Chapter 3 reviews key theories within Symbolic Interactionism, the theoretical framework chosen to underpin the analysis of the research data, and provides examples of how these theories may be used to illuminate constructions of identity. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology and design of this study. It first explains the constructivist interpretivist philosophy behind the choice of Symbolic Interactionism as a methodology. It then explains my rationale for using in-depth interviews as a research method, as well as describing the decisions made and procedures followed in collecting, coding and analysing the data. Chapters 5 and 6 offer an analysis and discussion of the data in line with the seven main themes that emerged from the analysis. Chapter 7 concludes by summarising the main findings of the study in relation to the three research questions, indicating how these findings contribute to knowledge in the field, suggesting possible

implications of the findings and avenues for further research, and reflecting on the study as a whole, including its limitations.

# CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON EAP PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter builds on the ideas introduced in Chapter 1 by situating EAP within the literature surrounding professionalism and professional identity in order to provide a theoretical basis for my analysis of the meanings EAP practitioners attach to notions of professional identity and issues discussed in the EAP literature, and how they construct their identities in response to those meanings. This study is underpinned by the view that identity is dynamic and constructed through social interaction (Pascale, 2011), and that professionals formulate their identities through a constant process of interaction with the society in which they are embedded (Greenwood, 1957). Therefore, a focus on the social aspects of how professional identity is conceptualised seems the most effective means of illuminating the ways in which EAP practitioners construct their identities.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section briefly describes changes that have led to a shift towards a neoliberal model of higher education in the UK and the particular implications of this shift for EAP. The next section examines conceptualisations of the professions in terms of their autonomy, specialist knowledge, the service ideal and the professional community, and how these relate to EAP. This is followed by a more focused discussion of issues surrounding the specialist knowledge of EAP professionals. The penultimate section examines issues around scholarship and EAP, and the final section highlights the aspects of EAP professional identity that are underexplored in the literature in order to explain how my research will add new knowledge to the field

## 2.2 Higher education and EAP

A global shift towards a neoliberal economic model has had a number of effects on higher education and is inextricably linked to the development of EAP (Hadley, 2015). In the UK, the changes to higher education began in 1981 when government funding was cut (Kogan and Kogan, 1983) in response to a perception that the country needed to be globally competitive and to produce an employable workforce (Clegg, 2008). Further cuts in the years that followed resulted in the introduction of tuition fees in 1998, as recommended in the Dearing Report (1997), and a further increase in fees in 2012 (Universities UK, 2013). As a result of these changes, there has been shift towards vocationalism and a massification of higher education, resulting in an increased demand for international students (Hadley, 2015) in order to "shore up holes left by reduced Government funding" (De Vita and Case, 2003:383). Between 2006 and 2017, the percentage of non-UK domiciled students increased from 14.1% to 23.2%, 13.3% of whom were non-EU students (Universities UK, 2018), with non-EU fees accounting for 23.4% of teaching income (Universities UK, 2018). The balance of funding has thus moved from government grants to tuition fees, with UK government funding for teaching dropping from 29% of the total income in 2006-2007 down to just 6.3% in 2016-2017 (Universities UK, 2018).

EAP has developed in the context of, and to a large extent as a result of, this neoliberalism of higher education (Hadley, 2015), both in order to support L2 students in their studies and to prepare those who do not yet have the requisite language skills for entry to the academy. Although the ostensible purpose of EAP is to enable students to access academic opportunities, there are many within higher education who see it as a means of increasing enrolment of international students (Hadley, 2015), who are a valuable source

of revenue (De Vita and Case, 2003). This economic context has numerous effects on how EAP is viewed and practiced, which will be discussed in the sections that follow.

Despite its commercial value within higher education, EAP appears to suffer from a lack of recognition or understanding within the academy, and this – in addition to the commodification of EAP – appears to underlie many of the issues it is facing. Because EAP is not widely recognised as an academic discipline, and as there are few high-level EAP academics in universities, EAP practitioners lack cultural capital in comparison to other academics (Bell, 2016; Ding, 2019). This lack of cultural capital reduces the agency of practitioners and excludes them from certain theoretical debates in higher education (Burke and Hermerschmidt, 2005), thereby limiting their involvement in decision-making processes and ability to implement change within the field (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

The lack of recognition or understanding of EAP has been articulated by Ding and Bruce (2017) as a corollary of a "significant tension that exists between outsider and insider views of the discipline" (2017:83). They maintain that the 'outsider view' is of EAP as a profit-making support activity that focuses on outcomes, whereas the 'insider view' is that EAP is a complex, research-informed academic field. This framing is compelling, but the use of the terms 'outsider' and 'insider' may be misinterpreted as indicating that these views are the province of those either outside of or within the profession. Nevertheless, the 'professional disarticulation' (Hadley, 2015, quoted in Ding, 2019) that EAP practitioners appear to suffer from suggests that the 'insider view' is far from homogenous, and, as Ding and Bruce (2017) themselves point out, the 'outsider view' may also be held by managers or practitioners within the field. Despite the potential for misunderstanding in the use of these terms, the insider/outsider framing is useful in

articulating issues facing the profession and in examining how practitioners position themselves. The slight opacity of the terms also highlights the complexity of practitioner views towards the profession. This framing will thus be used to elucidate certain issues within the field in the sections that follow.

## 2.3 Conceptualising the professions

In order to examine the professional identity of EAP practitioners, and to situate their practice within debates around professionalism, this section explores what it means to be a professional. Since the 'age of the autonomous professional' in the 1960s and 1970s (Hargreaves, 2000), many theorists have attempted to explain the privileged position of the professions by isolating features that distinguish them from corporate entities (Brock, 2006). This study eschews the more normative definitions attempted by traditional scholars, but certain conceptualisations of the professions provide a useful basis from which to examine changes that have occurred within higher education, how these changes may have contributed to a sense of 'crisis and loss' (Beck and Young, 2005:184) among professionals, and how this may be relevant to EAP professional identity.

This section therefore examines a frequently cited feature of the professions − the notion of professional autonomy – and discusses how its erosion has impacted on three further features commonly associated with the professions: specialist knowledge, the service ideal, and the professional community. These core conceptualisations have problematic elements but encapsulate features of the professions that seem to deserve examination. They also represent broad areas in which EAP may be struggling to assert its identity as a profession, and therefore form a useful starting point from which to examine EAP and

to explore issues facing the profession that may have relevance for the identities of practitioners.

Professional communities have traditionally been awarded privilege and autonomy by wider society because they are believed to hold specialised knowledge, and because it is assumed that these communities define and regulate the standards of their own practice (Shulman, 1998). However, the latter half of the 20th century witnessed a shift in how the professions were perceived. The "crisis of confidence in professional knowledge" (Schön, 1983:3) that occurred in the 1980s and the spread of neoliberalism as an economic model (Hadley, 2015) – resulting in notions of professionalism increasingly being replaced by discussion of management, quality and client satisfaction (Barnett, 2008) − had profound implications for professionals' autonomous positioning. This loss of autonomy is an issue for academics in higher education in general, and EAP practitioners in particular, not because autonomy is valuable in itself, but because its replacement with market forces as a means of control has implications for these professionals' ability to manage their own activities, their control over knowledge, their ability to monitor their own ethical behaviour and fulfil the service ideal traditionally associated with the professions, and the power and functions of their professional organisations.

While early professionals sought to insulate themselves from the pressures of the market economy (Larson, 2013), and their performance was evaluated only by their peers (Greenwood, 1957), academics are now constrained by standards and quality assurance measures handed down by managers whose values are often seen to be in conflict with those of the academics (Rowland, 2002), thus "undermining the traditional autonomy and respect accorded to academics as intellectuals and professionals in the Schönian sense"

(Clegg, 2008:330). This has resulted in the fragmentation of university life and academic identities (Rowland, 2002; Giroux, 2014). These changes are particularly salient for EAP practitioners, as EAP's capacity to generate income and attract international students who pay high fees means it is especially subject to decisions driven by market forces rather than educational considerations (Hadley, 2015). These decisions are often made by university managers in the absence of consultation with EAP practitioners (Barkas, 2011), thereby undermining their autonomy and agency. Due to its success in earning revenue, EAP is frequently perceived as a commercial activity rather than an academic one, and it is subsequently often outsourced to private operators (Fulcher, 2009). Paradoxically, those EAP units that are *not* successful in generating income are also vulnerable to privatisation on the part of universities that wish to offload the cost of EAP provision, and which are promised large numbers of international students in return (Fulcher, 2009). Outsourcing isolates the field from the academy, but this isolation is not confined to the private sector. Even within public universities, cost-cutting measures frequently result in EAP provision being moved to 'support' or 'professional services' departments, thereby reducing the autonomy of practitioners and their agency in effecting change in terms of their relationship with the academy and engagement in academic activities (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

A second effect of the loss of autonomy, particularly in higher education, is the loss of control over knowledge. Early professionals "defined the boundaries of their own knowledge base" (Beck and Young, 2005:188), and, traditionally, higher education featured knowledge structures with specific names and clearly articulated discourses, which Bernstein (2000, cited in Beck and Young, 2005) referred to as 'singulars'. These knowledge structures have the effect of creating a 'strongly bounded identity' (Beck and

Young, 2005:185). However, more recently in higher education, 'regionalisation' − the structuring of curricula according to demand (Bernstein, 2000, cited in Beck and Young, 2005) – has eroded the intellectual authority of experts in designing their own courses. Which 'regions' of knowledge are 'chosen' depends on the external forces of the market rather than the judgement of academics (Beck and Young, 2005). This 'fragmentation of knowledge' (Rowland, 2002) has profound implications for professional identity, which was once predicated on clear knowledge traditions, but now has less to which to attach itself. Unlike Bernstein's 'singulars' (2000, cited in Beck and Young, 2005), the knowledge structures and discourses of EAP are not as clearly articulated as those of traditional disciplines, which means the difficulties academics now face in forming a 'strongly bounded identity' (Beck and Young, 2005:185) are even more pronounced for EAP practitioners, making EAP particularly vulnerable to being positioned as a commercial activity rather than an academic discipline. The professional knowledge of EAP practitioners warrants detailed examination and will therefore be addressed in the next section.

A third effect of the loss of autonomy is on the ability of professionals to monitor their own ethical behaviour. Because they controlled their own markets (Larson, 2013), early professionals needed to demonstrate their commitment to social welfare in order to retain the confidence of the public (Greenwood, 1957). Thus, the notion of service was considered key within conceptualisations of the professions (Eraut, 1994; Quicke, 1998; Nixon *et al*, 2001; Whitty, 2008; Wilensky, 1964), and traditionally it was the moral principles of the professions rather than their contractual obligations that made the professions unique (Carr, 2006; Nixon *et al*, 2001). However, this notion of moral purpose in the service of society began to be questioned during the 1960s and 1970s (Cruess *et al*,

2000), and professionals began to be seen as "self-serving rather than altruistic" (Eraut, 1994:5). This − together with the spread of neoliberal ideas such as efficiency, competition, and the belief that public services would be more effective if managed like private ones (Ranson, 2003) − has resulted in an emphasis on the concept of client rights and accountability (Eraut, 1994; Ranson, 2003). However, this emphasis on accountability means institutions are increasingly focusing on complying with performance measurements and targets rather than on the actual service they are providing (Hargreaves, 2000; Ranson, 2003). The consequence of this in higher education is a view of service that is more closely connected with business than public bodies (Macfarlane, 2005), and a decrease rather than an increase in public trust (Ranson, 2003), which has implications for the identity of professionals working in higher education.

As members of the academy, EAP practitioners are also affected by this audit culture and its implications for the professional service ideal. Although EAP may be considered to provide a public service in that its main concern is supporting students on their journey into and through higher education, the notion of the service ideal as a feature of professionalism can be problematised in a number of ways within the EAP context. Preparation courses such as foundation or pre-sessional courses are frequently viewed as a means of generating income rather than providing education. Even insessional courses, which are usually offered as a free service to students, are often positioned as a marketing strategy rather than a moral imperative, resulting in a reduction in the university's 'public good' functions (Walker, 2001:2) and the potential erosion of trust in those professionals providing the service (Groundwater-Smith and Sachs, 2002).

The moral aspect of service is also problematic when we consider that EAP programmes are frequently a means of recruiting more international students, an important source of income (Universities UK, 2018). International student recruitment agencies, often based in the students' countries of origin, work to recruit students for universities on a commission basis, but may be "ethically at odds with the branded image of the receiving HEI[1]" (Hadley, 2015:64), and in the UK there have even been cases of recruiters providing students with false English language test certificates in order for them to gain entry to UK universities (Hadley, 2015). There are also concerns about aspects of student recruitment and progression at private providers of EAP. These providers usually promise to increase student numbers and frequently lower the entry requirements in order to boost numbers (Fulcher, 2009). The following is an example of the kind of claims often made by private providers:

> students are admitted with 'GCSE or equivalent' in their subject, and IELTS 3.0-3.5 or lower; the organisation claims that within two years these students will have achieved the equivalent of IELTS 6.5 on their own assessments, *and* be ready for direct entry into the *second* year of undergraduate study.
>
> (Fulcher, 2009:138 original emphasis)

As Fulcher points out, "[w]hile language professionals realise that the claims are bizarre, they appear to be accepted at face value by many senior university staff" (2009:138). Once students complete their EAP courses, private providers tend to insist on using their own course assessments to evaluate whether students are eligible for entry to the university rather than the usual standardised English tests, such as IELTS or TOEFL (Fulcher, 2009; Bell, 2016). This raises clear concerns that private providers are virtually guaranteeing entry to the university as part of their recruitment strategy (Fulcher, 2009).

[1] Higher Education Institution

These problems are by no means confined to the private sector. Because EAP units are frequently expected, in line with a neoliberal business model, to perform 'efficiently', they are often required to prepare students for university within unrealistic time frames, which places undue pressure on EAP units and students (Ding and Bruce, 2017). Related to this is the expectation that universities will compete for students, which means that EAP is often marketed as a way to facilitate speedy entry to degree programmes. In-house tests, rather than commercially available standardised tests, may be used to assess English language, and there is often pressure on EAP units to ensure the progression of as many students as possible, which may then result in students struggling to cope with the demands of the degree programmes on which they are enrolled (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

Another issue related to the service ideal is that the notions of 'service' and 'support' are often bundled together in the EAP context and used to juxtapose EAP with other academic activities (Turner, 2012), thereby positioning "EAP teachers as lower-status members of the academic hierarchy who must win the approval of higher-status content faculty" (Benesch, 2001:53). This idea of service has long been associated with EAP. In her 1984 book on ESP, McDonough describes how EAP practitioners work "'in the service of' another non-language department" (McDonough, 1984:104). She appears to find this idea of EAP being in service to other departments unproblematic; however, the location of EAP units in 'bolt-on' service centres may be seen to draw a line between a humanistic view of academic tutors who offer pastoral support to students, and an instrumental view of support departments which provide a contractual service to consumers in the form of language support (Macfarlane, 2011). Furthermore, as Fulcher (2009) puts it: "the TESOL/EAP unit has never had the opportunity to become 'academically respectable'

because it is a central service along with cleaning and catering, or a recruitment tool within the International Office" (2009:142), and, as will be discussed in the following sections, this has implications for the ability of EAP practitioners to engage in scholarship and develop their professional knowledge.

These issues all have implications for the professional identity of EAP practitioners, whose service ethic may be in conflict with the aims and practices of the institutions in which they are working. In this context, we may consider the moral aspect of the service ideal to be a kind of 'feeling rule' – a socially shared rule about how we should feel in particular circumstances (Hochschild, 1979). The 'feeling rule' frequently imposed by institutions that positions EAP as a valuable marketing tool and revenue generator that benefits the university, may thus be in conflict with the professional notion of service as a public good, resulting in a need for practitioners to engage in 'emotion work': "the act of trying to change in degree or quality an emotion or feeling" (Hochschild, 1979:561). The conflict between these two feeling rules may result in the 'professional disarticulation' of EAP practitioners who become dislocated from the professional identities they attach to themselves and become less emotionally engaged with their work (Hadley, 2015).

Another commonly cited feature of the professions is that they were traditionally regulated by their own professional organisations. However, the loss of trust in professionals (Eraut, 1994) and the increased emphasis on accountability, have eroded the autonomy these organisations were once seen to possess. This is particularly the case in higher education, where academics now have less control over their own professional activities due to external market forces and the prevailing audit culture (Clegg, 2008;

Rowland, 2002). Therefore, in the context of higher education, it may be more helpful to view a professional community in terms of Wenger's (2006) communities of practice, rather than as a professional organisation that regulates practice. Wenger (2006) describes communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2006:1). They share three essential characteristics:

1. The domain – members share an area of interest and learn from each other
2. The community – members form relationships and are actively engaged in discussions/activities. They share information and help each other. Interaction is key.
3. The practice – members are practitioners who share resources through interaction

(Wenger, 2006)

In addition to being necessary for the sharing of knowledge and resources, these communities are vital in evaluating knowledge contributions through peer review and publication (Shulman, 1998). This notion of a professional community is particularly important to EAP practitioners, who acquire a great deal of their knowledge on the job and therefore need to engage with colleagues – both in their workplaces and in the wider field – and a broad range of EAP literature (Alexander, 2010). However, three aspects of the EAP professional community can be problematised: the lack of agency of our main professional organisation, BALEAP, obstacles to engagement with the EAP community, and obstacles to cooperation with other members of the academy.

EAP has an active international academic community, whose members are involved in conferences, research and peer-reviewed publication (Bell 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Hyland, 2012). There are a range of professional organisations with which EAP

practitioners can engage, including international organisations that embrace broader fields, such as the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL), and Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), both of which offer special interest groups focusing on ESP and EAP. The *Asociación Europea de Lenguas para Fines Específicos* (AELFE – European Association of Languages for Specific Purposes) holds an annual conference on Languages for Specific Purposes (LSP) and publishes the journal, *Ibérica*. There are also smaller groups that organise conferences and professional meetings for EAP practitioners, such as the Norwegian Forum for English for Academic Purposes (NFEAP, 2019) and EAP in Ireland (no date), but the only global organisation catering specifically to EAP is BALEAP (Ding and Campion, 2016). BALEAP holds biennial conferences as well as one-day Professional Interest Meetings (PIMs), which are held every few months at institutions across the UK (BALEAP, 2019c). BALEAP is also involved in various projects to promote and develop EAP as a profession, which will be discussed in the section on professional knowledge below. Therefore, BALEAP can be seen to provide and encourage a community of practice in terms of Wenger's (2006) three characteristics:

1. The domain – BALEAP provides a central organisation with a shared area of interest.
2. The community – BALEAP organises conferences and PIMs, and has an email discussion board and twitter feed through which members can communicate.
3. The practice – BALEAP provides many useful resources and opportunities for practitioners to share these through its website, conferences and PIMs.

Although BALEAP has been heavily involved in supporting the professional development of EAP practitioners and the professionalisation of the field as a whole (Bell, 2016), it lacks the agency traditionally associated with professional organisations because

it has “no control over governance of EAP teaching and no control over entry to the profession” (Ding and Bruce, 2017:187). Since it has no formal authority over EAP, and has no voice in political domains as an advocate for EAP, it lacks effectiveness as a professional organisation (ibid). For example, in a climate of increased outsourcing of EAP to private providers (Fulcher, 2009), practitioners in the UK are often involved in fighting privatisation bids; however, to date, BALEAP has not been a voice for any members engaged in these disputes, who have to rely on unions or other staff members for support (Ding and Bruce, 2017). In their defence, the BALEAP Executive Committee is entirely composed of volunteers (BALEAP, 2019b), who no doubt have busy day jobs, so the achievements the organisation has made to date are particularly commendable.

Another issue is that the costs associated with engaging in the professional community are an obstacle to participation. Many universities with EAP departments are institutional members of BALEAP, but practitioners who work part-time or on fixed-term contracts may not have access to institutional memberships, so would have to pay membership fees out of their own pockets. An additional cost is that involved in attending conferences and professional meetings – both the fees for those events and any transport and accommodation costs involved. Some institutions do contribute to these costs, but those who view EAP as a support service may not view this as a worthwhile investment (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

Another issue regarding the EAP professional community is that EAP prepares students for study in specific disciplines, requiring communication and cooperation between EAP practitioners and lecturers in those disciplines (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Harwood and Petrić, 2013), so practitioners need to engage with a much larger community than just

their own. A number of writers in EAP (e.g. Hyland, 2002; Murray, 2016; Wingate, 2015) have argued for an English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) approach to EAP rather than an English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) approach. ESAP involves tailoring EAP courses to specific disciplines, whereas EGAP aims to prepare students for academic discourses in any field. Authors such as Wingate (2015) have pointed out the shortcomings of an EGAP approach, including the teaching of genres that might not be relevant to certain students, and the presentation of academic discourses as homogenous. However, this approach is still taken as a cheaper and less resource-intensive option (Hyland, 2002; Wingate, 2015), and may be seen as a manifestation of the conception of EAP as a support service rather than an academic endeavour (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

An ESAP approach, on the other hand, requires EAP practitioners to communicate and cooperate with teachers in the specific disciplines (Wingate, 2015); thus, EAP practitioners often need to be members of a number of communities of practice which shape their learning in different ways (Bell, 2016). However, this cooperation may be inhibited by the low status of EAP practitioners in some institutional contexts (Harwood and Petrić, 2013). Furthermore, those on temporary or part-time contracts, as EAP practitioners often are, "are cut off from the social dimension of the community of work" (Sharff and Lessinger, 1994:15), and may not have time to collaborate with those in other departments. Thus, practitioners may have difficulty engaging with this broader community.

## 2.4 Specialist knowledge in EAP

As discussed above, specialist knowledge is an oft-cited criterion for conceptualising professionals (e.g. Shulman, 1998), but theorists have differing views regarding where

this knowledge should be situated, the nature of the knowledge, and how it should be demonstrated – issues which are particularly pertinent to EAP. The practice of EAP requires a broad interdisciplinary knowledge base in order to achieve its aim of helping students to "develop a complex interaction of knowledge and skills in order to communicate and participate effectively in HE" (Ding and Bruce, 2017:5). It is not merely involved in developing general English proficiency, but also in developing students' discourse competence in using English in academic contexts (Bruce, 2017). Practitioners need to have an understanding of a range of EAP research streams, including academic genre studies, critical EAP, systemic functional linguistics, corpus linguistics and academic literacies (Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Harwood and Petrić, 2013; Hyland, 2012). However, this broad knowledge base means that it is difficult to articulate EAP as a specific discipline in the same vein as Bernstein's 'singulars' (2000, cited in Beck and Young, 2005), and this may have implications for EAP professional identity.

Another issue is that, despite the complex theoretical knowledge required, there is no clear development pathway for EAP practitioners or a specific entry route to the profession. Practitioners entering the field tend to do so with a variety of qualifications, and "teacher training for EAP remains largely ad hoc and informal" (Alexander, 2010:3). In the UK, practitioners most commonly start their careers in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (hereafter TESOL) – also commonly referred to as 'General English' or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) − and tend to hold English Language Teaching (hereafter ELT) qualifications such as the Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) or the Cambridge Diploma in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (Delta) (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019)(Ding and Bruce, 2017). Many universities also require EAP staff to hold

a master's degree (Ding and Campion, 2016), frequently in TESOL or Applied Linguistics, but there is considerable fluidity with regard to the subject of that degree.

BALEAP has made some effort to address the issue of entry-level qualifications through three main activities. The first is an accreditation scheme for EAP providers which requires staff on programmes wishing to be accredited by the organisation to be "graduates with a relevant teaching qualification, with the majority of teachers having diploma level teaching qualifications and experience teaching EAP in higher education" (BALEAP, 2018). The organisation has also developed a competency framework for teachers of EAP (CFTEAP) which outlines the core knowledge and skills involved in the practice (BALEAP, 2008). However, as Ding and Campion (2016) note, it is somewhat UK-centric considering that BALEAP (2019a) calls itself a 'global forum', and the methodology used to compile the competencies is not documented. BALEAP also list qualifications they consider appropriate for the UK context (BALEAP, 2008), but these are very broad, for example, "undergraduate degree" (2008:11) or "ELT teaching experience" (2008:12), in addition to the CELTA and Delta qualifications mentioned above. The third activity, launched in 2014, is the TEAP (Teaching EAP) Fellowship Scheme, which is broadly based on the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) Fellowship scheme (2015) and enables practitioners, through portfolio assessment, to become accredited as TEAP Associate Fellows, Fellows or Senior Fellows according to the stage of their career (BALEAP, 2014). However, this initiative does not seem to have gained currency in the field, as EAP job descriptions still tend to call for a combination of ELT qualifications and degrees rather than the TEAP.

This issue of qualifications for entry to EAP is often problematised in the literature (e.g. Campion, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Ding and Campion, 2016; Sharpling, 2002), and despite calls within the profession for more EAP-related courses for aspiring practitioners (BALEAP, 2008; Bell, 2016; Jordan, 2000), there are few on offer (Ding and Campion, 2016). The BALEAP website lists TEAP courses available in the UK, with the disclaimer that these are provided as a service to members and that it "does not accept responsibility for the content or quality of any of the courses" (BALEAP, 2019d). At the time of writing, only one master's programme in teaching EAP, one MA TESOL offering a TEAP module, and a few short courses and Postgraduate Certificate programmes focusing specifically on EAP were listed. However, despite its overt aim to address the lack of EAP-specific qualifications in EAP, BALEAP's competency framework does not mention any of these qualifications in its "Examples of appropriate qualifications and experience for the UK context" (BALEAP, 2008:11). Furthermore, advertisements for EAP jobs largely call for master's degrees in TESOL or Applied Linguistics rather than EAP-specific qualifications, so it is not surprising that the number of TEAP courses remains sparse.

As well as a call for EAP-specific qualifications, there is also a frequently expressed view that EAP practitioners should be educated to at least master's level. For example, Campion (2016) argues that postgraduate qualifications help teachers develop confidence, and, in their studies examining practitioners' transition from EFL to EAP, both Martin's (2014) and Krzanowski's (2001) participants noted that academic experience helped them to gain an understanding of their students' needs. These participants felt that the TESOL qualifications (e.g. CELTA, Delta) were useful in

developing teaching skills but did not prepare them for academic discourses. In Bell's (2016) interviews with well-known voices in EAP, a similar view was expressed:

> A number of respondents […] were quite explicit in their views that EAP teachers could be expected to have very little credibility or know-how in teaching Masters-level students, for example, unless they themselves had first gone through the experience of completing a Masters of their own.
>
> (Bell, 2016:268)

Bell (2016) goes so far as to argue that EAP practitioners will always be regarded as second-class citizens in the academy unless more of them acquire PhDs. My own position is that I would find my current postgraduate insessional teaching extremely difficult without having experienced postgraduate study myself, so I agree that these sorts of learning experiences are important for EAP practitioners, if only to gain a deeper understanding of certain academic norms and practices.

Although theoretical knowledge may be viewed as necessary to allow practitioners entry to a profession (Shulman, 1998), practice is also a central feature of professional knowledge (Eraut, 1992). However, there is often a tension between the theory learned in formal settings and the exigencies of the practice setting, requiring skill on behalf of the professional in negotiating this tension (ibid). In relation to this issue, Hegarty (2000) refers to Gibbons *et al*'s (1994) paradigm of Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production to highlight the shift that has occurred in how knowledge is produced. Mode 1 refers to traditional disciplinary knowledge largely produced in universities. However, in the modern information society, professionals can no longer claim ownership of knowledge (Larson, 2013). Therefore, Mode 1 has shifted to Mode 2 knowledge production, which is interdisciplinary, more flexible, and produced in different settings (Hegarty, 2000). It incorporates the practice element of knowledge by focusing on context and problem

solving. This means that professionals should be characterised by what they *do* rather than their academic qualifications (Vanderstraeten, 2007). This is particularly pertinent for teachers, whose professional knowledge and practice are complex. They draw on a number of knowledge bases − including pedagogical skills, experience, research, and subject knowledge (Hegarty, 2000) – and engage their 'artistry' (Grainger, 2001:1) in order to solve problems in the classroom. However, the implication here is that, although Mode 2 knowledge is important for professional practice, it depends on Mode 1 knowledge (Barnett, 2000).

Because of the lack of a clear entry route to EAP, the development of Mode 2 knowledge is particularly important to EAP practitioners, but the link between theory and practice (Shulman, 1998) or between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge (Hegarty, 2000) is not clearly articulated in EAP. There is little published research on how practitioners learn and develop in their role; however, there have been some small studies conducted in the UK (e.g. Campion 2016; Elsted, 2012; Martin, 2014) which reveal that the greatest challenge facing practitioners transitioning from TESOL to EAP is developing the specialised knowledge (Mode 1 and Mode 2) that they require. Therefore, teachers tend to find longer-term development opportunities more valuable than pre-service training (Ding and Bruce, 2017) because the knowledge they need to acquire about the discursive features of academic discourse is not immediately available from courses (Sharpling, 2002). These studies also reveal the value practitioners place on informal learning, for example through reading and interacting with colleagues. However, this learning is often framed as a coping strategy in response to a lack of formal development opportunities (Alexander, 2007; Campion, 2016).

Thus, EAP practitioners face the complex task of learning theory on the job, and at the same time applying that theory to their practice, whilst continuously learning from their experiences. This requires considerable professional artistry or 'artful competence' (Schön, 1983), but, as many practitioners learn EAP in this way (Campion, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Krzanowski, 2001), there is a tendency in the literature to present "a deficiency model of 'novice' EAP teachers, with a seeming over-concern for pointing out how these teachers are ill-prepared for an EAP role" (Ding and Campion, 2016:555). A further issue is that, because EAP is often positioned as a technical support service, and universities often fail to recognise the complexity of knowledge that practitioners require (Ding and Bruce, 2017), professional development opportunities vary tremendously from one institution to another (Campion, 2016).

## 2.5 Scholarship in EAP

A number of researchers (e.g. Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Hyland, 2012) have called for EAP practitioners to be more engaged in research and scholarship, as they support "our claim to disciplinary status and our identities as teachers and researchers" (Hyland, 2012:39). These terms may be defined in different ways, but for the purposes of this study, I will use Ding and Bruce's (2017) definitions, as they seem – in my experience – to reflect the way in which these words are employed in EAP. They define scholarship as "activities relating to *developing and refining one's overall knowledge of practice in EAP*, acknowledging that one's knowledge of practice will be both complex and multifaceted" (2017:111 original emphasis) and note that it should also be public and engage with the EAP community. An example, therefore, of scholarship might include conducting one's own classroom research and presenting the findings at a conference. They define research as "*a planned systematic investigation that aims to inform one*

*specialised aspect of the knowledge base on which the field of EAP draws*" (2017:111 original emphasis), and they specify that this needs to be "disseminated and critically reviewed" (2017:111). Overlaps in meaning make it difficult to draw a clear line between these two definitions, so, for the purposes of this study, research will refer to investigations that are peer-reviewed before publication in academic fora such as journals; while scholarship, although open to critical review because it is public, has a broader remit that does not require peer review or publication. I will also use the term 'scholarly activity' to refer to all research that informs professional knowledge and practice. This activity might include engagement with the literature or attending conferences.

As discussed in the section on specialist knowledge above, scholarly activity is particularly important for EAP practitioners in that they acquire much of their professional knowledge on the job. Furthermore, in a context in which EAP practitioners are increasingly deprofessionalised, and in order to position EAP as an academic field rather than a support service, it is important that practitioners engage in scholarship and that the profession asserts its research credentials. In addition, as teaching is central to EAP practice, "the co-existence of teaching and research in EAP is, and needs to be, emblematic of our discipline" (Hamp-Lyons, 2011:4). I also agree with Stenhouse's (1981) view that research ought to be published because it needs to be open to criticism. This need not be formal publication but should involve making research "part of a community of critical discourse" (Stenhouse, 1981:17). For example, Ding and Bruce (2017) suggest that novice researchers start with small-scale studies, such as action research, and present at conferences as a first step.

However, there are a number of barriers to engagement with scholarship in EAP. Although recognition of EAP has increased, and publications in the field have become more numerous (Hyland, 2012; Thompson, 2018), cost-cutting measures often result in EAP departments being moved from academic departments to 'support' or 'professional services' units (Hamp-Lyons, 2011), where practitioners can be employed on 'teaching-only' contracts that do not allow for research time (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002). Therefore, practitioners often need to commit personal time to research or scholarly activity (Ding and Bruce, 2017) limiting their opportunities to engage in scholarship.

Another issue is that, within a neoliberal model of higher education, academic departments need to operate as 'cost centres' which balance their books (Ding and Bruce, 2017). This means that EAP units are increasingly required to be income generating in order to fund other activities in the university (Ding and Bruce, 2017; Hadley, 2015). Because EAP units are often a significant source of income, teachers are frequently required to take on heavy teaching loads, which gives them very little time to be research active or to be research-informed practitioners (Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017). In addition to their heavy teaching loads, EAP practitioners are often employed on part-time, temporary or fixed-term contracts (Hadley, 2015), which can exacerbate the difficulties discussed above. Part-time teachers in academia are more likely to be deskilled and engaged in routinized work (Sharff and Lessinger, 1994), which undermines the role of professional knowledge and scholarship in their teaching. They are also less likely than full-time staff to have time built into their contracts for the development of professional knowledge and therefore need to "do additional, unpaid academic homework to maintain their professional status" (Sharff and Lessinger, 1994:15).

Lack of understanding of the complexity of EAP professional knowledge, and the positioning of EAP as a support service also impact on practitioners' ability to engage in scholarship. EAP practitioners working in institutions where EAP is viewed as a support service are more likely to be identified as technicians (Morgan, 2009) or 'para-academics' (Macfarlane, 2011) who support the academic community, and who have no need to develop their own knowledge of theory and practice except in order to develop technical pedagogical methods (Ding and Bruce, 2017; Hyland, 2012). On the other hand, those practitioners in institutions where it is seen as an academic field of study use a much wider range of resources and engage at a deeper level with professional knowledge (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

## 2.6 Lack of research on EAP practitioners and their identity

In spite of the fairly large body of literature devoted to EAP, scant attention has been paid to EAP practitioners themselves (Ding and Bruce, 2017). In the existing literature, identity generally seems to be examined in the context of something else (for example, critical EAP), and the 'big names' in EAP publishing have tended to focus their research on the knowledge base of EAP rather than its practitioners. Another issue is that, when the identity of EAP practitioners is discussed in the literature, it is often presented as somewhat homogenous, and the diversity of practitioner experience and identities is not always clearly represented. In the sections above, I have referred to some studies that discuss issues of practitioner identity, but here I will summarise the main studies in this area in order to highlight the 'gap' in the literature with regard to the examination of EAP practitioner identity and to demonstrate how this led to my research questions.

A few small-scale studies on practitioners themselves have been conducted over the years, and the bulk of these, some of which were discussed above, seem to have examined practitioners' transition from EFL to EAP. Examples include Alexander's (2007) online survey investigating the initial training and further professional development of 175 EAP practitioners, Campion's (2016) qualitative study on the challenges her six interviewees faced in teaching EAP and their views on EAP-specific training courses and qualifications, Elsted's (2012) qualitative study on the attitudes and attributes her participants felt were valuable in transitioning to EAP, Martin's (2014) study on four teachers' experiences of making the transition from General English to EAP, and Krzanowski's (2001) exploration of how EAP practitioners felt their TESOL qualifications prepared them for EAP. Further examples of research into practitioner identity have been usefully summarised in Blaj-Ward's (2014) book on researching EAP. However, her chapter on research into EAP practitioners themselves, apart from discussing the studies on the transitions from General English to EAP referred to above, mostly highlights issues related to pedagogy, management and teacher involvement in the learning process rather than examining practitioners' views on the status of EAP practitioners and the issues facing the profession.

The only larger studies or books that I am aware of which focus on EAP practitioner identity are Ding and Bruce's (2017) book on the EAP practitioner, Bell's (2016) PhD thesis on "Practitioners, pedagogies and professionalism in English for Academic Purposes", and Hadley's (2015) book examining what he calls 'BLEAPS' – blended EAP professionals. Ding and Bruce's (2017) book, *The English for Academic Purposes Practitioner: Operating on the Edge of Academia*, provides a very useful overview of the status of the profession and the practitioner, and examines issues related to EAP

practitioner identity that resonate very strongly with my experience in the field. Although their book is a very timely, and extremely useful, examination of the issues facing EAP practitioners, particularly in terms of their professional identity, it is based on the published literature in EAP rather than the voices of practitioners themselves. This is by no means a weakness – their book is a very important addition to the sparse literature on EAP practitioner identity – but it does still leave a space for more research into the experiences of EAP practitioners.

Hadley's (2015) book is the only larger-scale study I am aware of that investigates issues of professional identity from the perspectives of practitioners themselves. It is a large study involving qualitative interviews with 98 informants − including EAP students, EAP practitioners, former EAP practitioners, administrators, and non-EAP academics – at universities in the United States, Japan and the UK. He borrows Whitchurch's (2008) notion of 'blended professionals' working in 'third spaces' – those spaces in the academy that combine administrative and pedagogical functions – in order to examine the identity of EAP practitioners working in those third spaces. He is particularly interested in how neoliberalism has shaped universities and EAP in particular. His study examines the experiences of those working in this climate and how they deal with the challenges they face. This is a much-needed contribution to the literature on practitioner identity, particularly as it focuses on the voices of practitioners themselves, but it focuses more on the issues related to 'blended' administrative and academic functions than on issues facing EAP teachers.

Bell's (2016) PhD thesis also examines the views of those working in EAP, but his research is based on interviews with 15 prominent 'names' in EAP rather than ordinary

practitioners engaged in everyday practice. He expresses two main aims in his study: to trace the development of the field of EAP over time, and to examine how the work of EAP practitioners develops alongside it. His study is somewhat unusual in that all of his participants, apart from two, are interviewed as themselves; in other words, they are not anonymised. He chose well-known voices in EAP because he was interested in the views of the people who had been directly involved in core developments in the history of EAP. His study provides a fascinating and extremely helpful overview of the main research streams, issues and developments in EAP. It also provides a timely analysis of issues facing EAP as a profession, including how its commercialisation may be impacting on the status and development of the profession and its practitioners. Therefore, it is a tremendously valuable contribution to the literature on EAP practitioner identity, but, as his informants are highly respected academics in EAP, it still leaves a gap in the literature with regard to the experiences and voices of ordinary jobbing EAP practitioners.

Therefore, although scholarly interest in EAP practitioner identity has grown in recent years, there is still a paucity of literature in this area, particularly studies examining the experiences of practitioners themselves. Bell (2016) and Ding and Bruce's (2017) arguments regarding professional identity resonated strongly with me, and before embarking on this study, I expected other EAP practitioners to hold similar views. However, the meanings my interviewees attached to issues around the professional status of EAP practitioners has made me realise that my perspective has largely been informed by the main scholars in the field – whose views are also reflected in Bell's (2016) and Ding and Bruce's (2017) work − and that other practitioners may identify in very different ways, which has led me to question my stance somewhat. Therefore, the issues discussed here have led me to seek an understanding of how EAP practitioners view their own

professional identities within this context. In order to address this question, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ1: What meanings do practitioners attach to notions of professional identity, and how do they construct their own identities in response to these interpretations?

RQ2: How do the meanings practitioners attach to issues discussed in the EAP literature influence how they construct their identities?

RQ3: What implications do these identity constructions appear to have for practitioners and for the profession?

The issues facing the EAP profession discussed in this chapter were used to inform the questions asked during the interviews, and Chapters 5 and 6 attempt to answer the research questions by examining the meanings practitioners attach to those issues and how they construct their identities accordingly. The interpretivist methodology, Symbolic Interactionism, is used as a theoretical framework within which to examine and attempt to reveal these interpretations and meanings. The next chapter will therefore examine the main Symbolic Interactionist theories chosen for this study and discuss how they may be useful in revealing the meanings EAP practitioners attach to these issues, and thereby generate new understandings surrounding the professional identity of EAP practitioners.

# CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines Symbolic Interactionism (hereafter SI), the theoretical framework chosen for this study, to evaluate what insights it can offer into the professional identity of EAP practitioners. Due to the nature of identity as constructed through social interaction (Pascale, 2011), a qualitative interpretivist approach was deemed most appropriate for an exploration of this identity. The Symbolic Interactionist approach views identity as socially constructed through interactions and interpretations (Blumer, 1969), which is the belief underlying this study. This research is also underpinned by a view of the role of researcher as a co-constructor of knowledge. This perspective is important since the identity I have constructed as an EAP practitioner is inextricably linked with the experiences, people and literature I have encountered, and I am very much involved in interpreting and co-constructing the meanings my participants attach to EAP professional identity. As will be discussed below, the particular Symbolic Interactionist theories chosen through which to analyse the data, and which are reviewed here, were selected because they offer insights into the particular aspects of identity that are explored in this study.

The first section of this chapter outlines the central tenets of SI. The sections that follow introduce the six main theories selected from this framework in order to analyse the interview data. Examples are also provided of studies on professional identity that have employed these theories in order to suggest how they might be used to shed light on the meanings EAP practitioners attach to notions of professional identity, how the meanings practitioners attach to issues discussed in the EAP literature influence how they construct

their identities, and the possible implications of these identity constructions for practitioners and the profession.

### 3.2 The main tenets of Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism is a label for an approach to the study of social life and behaviour (Blumer, 1969) that developed from the ideas of the American Pragmatists (Pascale, 2011). The Pragmatists argued that there is no objective, true reality, but that knowledge is acquired actively and dynamically (Pascale, 2011). The premise of SI was that individuals and society are inseparable and are developed through shared meanings (Pascale, 2011). This was an enormous shift from the prevailing objective behaviourist perspective to one in which social research aimed to gain a deep understanding of the "symbolic practices that make a shared reality possible" (Pascale, 2011:78).

Although SI is a broad and heterogeneous approach, there are similarities in the ways its scholars view human group life (Blumer, 1969), and a shared premise that meaning is the product of social interaction (Pascale, 2011). SI is usually seen to have three main tenets:

- individuals behave towards objects according to the meaning those objects hold for them
- meanings are created through human interaction over a period of time; meaning is collective not individual or intrinsic
- meanings change through interaction

(Pascale, 2011)

Both individual and joint behaviour are formed in and through this process of interaction and interpretation, and because of this, human group life is a formative process; it is not

merely an expression of pre-existing factors (Blumer, 1969). Interpretation is thus a key aspect of Blumer's theory. Individuals construct meaning both from their own actions and from those of others – meaning is not inherent in actions but must be interpreted (Blumer, 1969). Another key aspect of Blumer's (1969) theory is that of 'joint action', which consists in "the larger collective form of action that is constituted by the fitting together of the lines of behavior of the separate participants" (Blumer, 1969:70). In order to form this joint action, individuals need to construct a shared interpretation of one another's gestures (Blumer, 1969).

Since EAP practitioners *interpret* the world they encounter, assign meanings to what they see and hear, and construct their identities in response to these interpretations, SI seems to be a useful framework within which to examine EAP professional identities and how they are constructed. Six main theories that come under the banner of SI were chosen, as these seem the most helpful in illuminating the identities that emerged from the data. The six theories overlap in multiple ways and can perhaps be framed in terms of two main SI theories: the *looking-glass self* (Cooley, 1998) and impression management (Goffman, 1959). Therefore, the following sections first explain these two theories, and then examine the four remaining theories and how they relate to the first two.

### 3.3 The looking-glass self

As discussed above, one's self identity is inextricably linked with others (Cooley, 1998), and one aspect of this sense of self is influenced by individuals' perception of how others view that self. Cooley (1998) calls this social self the "*looking-glass self*" (1998:164), which develops from social interactions and the perceptions of others (Scott and Marshall, 2009). This idea of self has three main components. First, individuals imagine how others

view them; then they imagine how others judge what they see, and finally, their feelings are affected by that imagined judgement (Cooley, 1998). The imagined judgement is essential in creating the self-feeling, and, importantly, "the character and weight of the other, in whose mind we see ourselves, makes all the difference with our feeling" (Cooley, 1998:164). Thus, identity is a social construction which is constantly being adjusted according to people's perceptions of how others judge them. The theories below are related to how individuals construct their own identities in response to this *looking-glass self*, and how they may behave in relation to that construction.

### 3.4 Impression management

In response to this *looking-glass self* view that has been constructed, individuals attempt to manage the impressions of others in order to influence this view (Goffman, 1959). In other words, they perform for others, both verbally and through other means of communication, and move towards forming a working consensus; they may not necessarily have the same views but maintain a harmonious relationship by acting as if they do (Goffman, 1959). Thus, identity is a result of collaborative interactions in a particular context which the actor uses in order to perform and manage the impressions of those with whom he or she is interacting, and, in order to manage impressions, the actor presents an idealised version of the self which generally conforms to the norms of the group (Goffman, 1959; Hyland, 2012).

As implied above, the purpose of impression management may be to establish a 'collective identity', which Johnston *et al* (1994) describe as "the (often implicitly) agreed upon definition of membership, boundaries, and activities for the group" (1994:15). Creating this collective identity involves negotiation and conflict over how to define a

situation, through which members "construct the collective 'we'" (1994:15). Therefore, collective identities are not stable; they are continuously changing through the interpretation and influence of individuals as well as the group. In order to construct this collective identity, groups often engage in 'boundary maintenance', which involves setting boundaries around the social group, and "the sharper the boundaries, the clearer the we-they distinctions, and the stronger the collective identity" (Johnston *et al*, 1994:20).

Another aspect of impression management is the use of *accounts* or *justifications* to explain a particular − usually unexpected or inappropriate − behaviour or utterance (Scott and Lyman, 1968). Individuals assume particular identities that are appropriate for the account being offered. However, as Scott and Lyman (1968) point out, once an account is made, the speaker is committed to the identity attached to this account; therefore, for this identity to be redefined, another account will have to be made for this new identity. The danger of this identity switching is that it may cast doubt on the speaker's claim to identity. The speaker's response to this may then be to rationalise the identity. This is a phased process in which *accounts* generate questions, which lead to more *accounts*. This theory may be helpful as a means of illuminating processes through which the study participants frame and reframe their identities.

An example of how these theories have been used is Foley's (2005) study of how midwives in the USA attempt to manage their public identities. She conducted in-depth interviews with 26 midwives in Florida in order to examine how they framed their identities with regard to historical and media representations, and how they use boundary negotiation and impression management to construct those identities. She maintains that

midwifery in the USA is a marginalised occupation, resulting in competing identities which midwives need to negotiate. She found that they use boundary negotiation in order to distinguish different types of midwives, for example, those who align themselves with a medical model of midwifery and those who see it as a more natural process. She also found that "midwives shape their public identity through techniques of impression management" (2005:198) and that they "arrange performances for different audiences—clients, doctors, or politicians" (2005:198). An example Foley provides of this impression management through arranging performances is a discussion between two midwives about what they are going to wear when lobbying at the state capitol. One jokes: "I'm gonna wear my little gauzy, yellow, hippie dress and I'll bring like a ray of sunshine into the day for these legislators" − echoing public perceptions of midwifery as a somewhat hippy-ish, non-medical profession − and the other midwife responds: "you've got to dress professionally, otherwise you're just going to be trivialized" (Foley, 2005:198).

Foley's (2005) articulation of the position of midwives has many parallels with that of EAP practitioners in the UK. Both groups may be perceived to have a marginalised status within their broader context, neither profession seems to have one formal entry route in terms of training, and both appear to experience a lack of outside recognition of the complex nature of what they do and the professional knowledge required to perform the job. Thus, the theories of impression management and boundary maintenance may also be useful in illuminating EAP professional identity. For example, practitioners may attempt to manage impressions in response to labels that are attached to the profession, either by engaging in activities that counteract the labels attached to them – such as conducting research in order to undermine the 'support service' label – or by providing *accounts* (Scott and Lyman, 1968) for these labels by arguing that EAP *is* engaged in

supporting students. They may also engage in boundary maintenance in order to construct a collective identity for themselves that is easier for others to recognise.

### 3.5 Labelling theory

Becker's (1963) labelling theory explores how labels applied to individuals may impact on their identities. Individuals may construct their identities in response to *looking-glass self* perceptions of the meanings they believe others attach to those labels. Becker (1963) used the concept of deviance to discuss how labelling is used in identity negotiation and formation. He argued that the concept of deviance is created by society in the sense that society establishes the rules whose infraction is labelled deviance. From this perspective, deviance is not a feature of the person or act, but a consequence of the rules applied to the outsider; in other words, society has a shared meaning of deviance, and that meaning is then attached to the perceived deviant. Deviant behaviour is thus behaviour that is so *labelled*. These shared meanings and labels are not monolithic; societies are divided according to aspects such as class, ethnicity, employment and culture, and groups within these diverse societies create their own rules (Becker, 1963).

Becker explains how this process of labelling may affect the identity of the labelled. Being caught engaging in deviant behaviour has consequences for the identity of an individual, as it often results in the person being labelled a deviant. Related to this is the difference between one's 'master' or main status, and one's auxiliary status traits (Becker, 1963). For example, a doctor's master status might be her occupation as a doctor, but as a doctor, she might, for example, be expected to have certain auxiliary traits, such as being middle-class or white, in certain social contexts. If she does not fit these traits, she may be seen as not conforming to the role. If one is labelled a deviant, this becomes the master status

and various auxiliary traits are expected. For example, if a man is labelled a criminal, he might be expected to exhibit traits such as dishonesty or be expected to commit further crimes. Becker (1963) argues that some statuses take precedence over others. For example, writing in the 1960s, he argues that race, specifically being black, will override other statuses, such as being a doctor. Being a deviant is this kind of master status; by breaking a rule, one's main identity becomes that of a deviant.

Being labelled a deviant, in turn, has a self-fulfilling prophecy. First, the branded deviant is cut off from certain social groups. This may, in turn, lead to the person being forced into activities which are deviant. For example, someone labelled a criminal might have difficulty finding legitimate work, and may, therefore, be forced to resort to crime to survive. This labelling becomes complete when the deviant joins an organised deviant group and develops a feeling of commonality or belonging, which solidifies the identity as a deviant (Becker, 1963).

Becker's (1963) theory specifically explores the labelling of deviants, but it is not difficult to see how this labelling can apply to other aspects of social action. For the purposes of this study, this theory may shed light on certain labels that are applied to EAP practitioners. For example, the labels of 'service' and 'support', which are frequently applied to EAP, may be accepted as a master status by some EAP practitioners, thus solidifying their identity as a support service, while others may reject this label and construct an academic master status instead.

### 3.6 Stigmatised identities

Goffman's (1968) concept of stigmatised identities has some parallels with Becker's (1963) theories on deviance and labelling. Goffman (1968) distinguishes between the 'virtual social identity' we may attach to new acquaintances based on the first impression they make on us and the characteristics we attach to them because of this first impression, and the 'actual social identity' which that person possesses. If characteristics emerge that conflict with the virtual social identity that has been constructed, and if these characteristics are viewed as less desirable than those we anticipated, the new acquaintance then becomes tainted. This is what Goffman refers to as stigma. The stigmatising attribute is not undesirable in itself – it is undesirable in relation to the virtual social self that has been constructed. For example, if the 'virtual social identity' of a university teacher is seen to possess characteristics like research activity or the job title of 'lecturer', EAP practitioners may perceive themselves – through a *looking-glass self* construction of their identities – to be stigmatised by having an 'actual social identity' that is characterised by a teaching-only role and the job title of 'teacher'.

Goffman refers to "those who do not depart negatively from the expectations at issue" (1968:15) as 'normals'. We attach norms to others and expect certain behaviour according to the identity we have attached to them. We might not expect this behaviour from ourselves, as we have a different identity, so stigma only arises when someone does not match the identity that others expect of him or her. The stigmatised person may feel 'normal' but may perceive that others "do not really 'accept' him [or her] and are not ready to make contact with him [or her] on 'equal grounds'" (1968:18). The person may then feel that the stigmatising attributes do, in fact, make him or her less acceptable.

Stigmatised individuals may form in-group alignments with fellow stigmatised individuals and this group may claim to be the "real group […] to which [the stigmatised individual] *naturally* belongs" (Goffman, 1968:137 original emphasis). They are considered loyal if they align themselves with their 'real' group, and foolish if they align themselves with others. Those who align themselves with the in-group may exaggerate their stigmatised identities, resulting in further alienation from 'normals'. This may also reinforce the in-group as a 'real' group. Alternatively, stigmatised individuals might join out-groups by aligning themselves with 'normals'. Furthermore, stigmatised individuals construct their own identities in relation to "the degree to their stigma is apparent or obtrusive" (Goffman, 1968:130), and then distance themselves from those who are more stigmatised. The more stigmatised individuals align themselves with 'normals', the less stigmatised they feel (Goffman, 1968).

An example of the use of '*looking-glass self*' and 'stigmatized identity' theories to examine identity is O'Dwyer and Thorpe's (2013) study of government policy regarding how professionalism is defined, and how this policy relates to teachers with specific learning disabilities (SpLD) working in further education (FE) in England. One finding of this study was that SpLD teachers might construct a *looking-glass self* view of themselves in which they fear others will view them as stigmatised by their disabilities and therefore might avoid disclosing those disabilities for fear of negative consequences. Similarly, these ideas around stigma may help to elucidate how labels applied to EAP practitioners may be perceived to be stigmatising, and how this may affect their construction of their own professional identities. The idea of in-group or out-group alignments might also shed light on the ways in which practitioners may position themselves as either academics or support service workers.

### 3.7 Front and setting

Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach employs the theatre as an analogy for social interactions. The notion of 'regions' is an aspect of this approach that is related to impression management, and which may illuminate certain aspects of how identity is constructed. The 'front region' is the area where the performance (or interaction) takes place. Goffman refers to the 'sign-equipment' in this place as 'setting', which includes the stage props used in the performance, such as furniture or décor, and this setting forms part of how the identity is presented to others. Another aspect of front is 'personal front', which may include clothing or insignias of office or rank. Front can become institutionalised and "take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name" (Goffman, 1959:37).

An example of how the notion of front can be used to explain aspects of professional identity is Haas and Shaffir's (1977) study of how medical students manage impressions in order to create an image of professional competence. They argue that professionalisation involves using symbols and symbolic behaviour to "create an imagery of competence and the separation and elevation of the profession from those they serve" (Haas and Shaffir, 1977:73). They found that, as part of their socialisation, the medical students learned the imagery of the institution and adopted a 'cloak of competence' − for example, by wearing white lab coats − as part of the process of professionalisation. Similarly, these notions of front and setting may shed light on how insignias of academic rank, such as job titles or PhD qualifications, and settings such as office space, may be invoked in EAP practitioners' construction of their own identities.

### 3.8 Face and face-work

Another theory related to impression management is Goffman's (1967) notion of 'face'. This refers to the image individuals present to others, which is constructed through communication and involves a looking-glass evaluation of themselves as well as the other participants in the communicative context. It is not the same as identity because the image projected may not be consistent with what individuals consider to be their real selves. Individuals own their identity but not their face, the presentation of which requires impression management in order to persuade others to accept the face presented. If their interlocutors develop a different view of the face presented, this can cause friction within the communication process. In this situation, those communicating use adjustments and repairs known as 'face-work' (Goffman, 1967) in order to deal with this tension.

Individuals present a particular face when engaged in the process of 'sensemaking'. Sensemaking refers to the co-construction of meaning that results from an individual's self-presentation, other participants' response to the self that is presented, and resulting adjustments the individual subsequently makes in response to that feedback (Goffman, 1967; Patriotta and Spedale, 2009). Sensemaking is both social and grounded in identity: "who we think we are (identity) as organizational actors shapes what we enact and how we interpret, which affects what outsiders think we are (image) and how they treat us, which stabilizes or destabilizes our identity" (Weick *et al*, 2005:22). If sensemaking is successful, then 'working consensus' (Goffman, 1967) is achieved. However, threats to our identity result in senselosing (Patriotta and Spedale, 2009), which may then require face-work in an attempt to repair the image of the face presented.

Bourgoin and Harvey (2018) use the notion of face-work to elucidate their findings in a study of how management consultants maintain a professional image while learning in new roles. Professionals need to project an image of competence, and those in new settings may face conflict between maintaining a professional image and undertaking the new role (Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018). The authors found that, unlike members of traditional professions, "who envelop themselves in a 'cloak of competence' through the control of a specific body of knowledge, the differentiation of status symbols […] and emotional detachment from clients", the consultants engaged in face-work in the form of acknowledging their dependency on their clients for information, using a repertoire of symbolic actions and displaying "strong emotional attachment to their client" (Bourgoin and Harvey, 2018:1622). These notions of face-work and sensemaking may also be helpful in exploring how and why EAP practitioners align themselves with models of EAP as either a support service or an academic field of study.

A final theory is Moore's (2017) performative face theory, a new perspective on identity work that combines Goffman's concept of face with Butler's (1990) critical post cultural theory of performativity. Moore's theory links the study of how individuals perform face-work in order to achieve their goals, with how identity is linked to wider manifestations of power. It examines how identity work may be constrained by repeated discourses in a particular society. Butler (1990) argues that the influence of power in identity construction does not mean that individuals are without agency, but instead that they sometimes disrupt normative categorisations through their identity performance. This disruption is achieved through subversion, which involves performing identities that do not fit into normative categories. This subversion thereby undermines the logic of the normative categories and allows for other identities to become more intelligible. Moore

(2017) uses this argument to formulate her principle that "*negotiations of face are subversive when they denaturalize taken-for-granted identity categories*" (Moore, 2017: 263 original emphasis). This notion may be useful in discussing how EAP practitioners construct their own identities in opposition to normative categories within the academy.

## 3.9 Concluding comments

The interpretivist epistemology of the SI framework played an important role in the formulation of the research questions, as it focuses on how identities are constructed through interaction and interpretation. The aim of this chapter has thus been to illustrate how the selected theories may be used to answer the research questions by providing a lens through which to interpret and reveal the meanings practitioners attach to notions of professional identity and to the issues discussed in the EAP literature, and thereby create new understandings of how these practitioners construct their identities through this process of interaction and interpretation. It has, therefore, provided examples of ways in which the theories will be used to illuminate these interactions and interpretations in Chapters 5 and 6. The next chapter will discuss the methodological aspects of this study, including the research design process and the rationale behind my choice of methodology and research methods.

# CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter locates the study in philosophical and theoretical terms and discusses how the research design was developed in order to gain an understanding of the ways in which EAP practitioners construct their professional identity in response to meanings they attach to notions of professionalism and issues perceived to be facing the EAP profession. I explain my rationale for using Symbolic Interactionism to guide my methodology, and how I generated data through in-depth interviews with 17 EAP practitioners in order to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What meanings do practitioners attach to notions of professional identity, and how do they construct their own identities in response to these interpretations?
RQ2: How do the meanings practitioners attach to issues discussed in the EAP literature influence how they construct their identities?
RQ3: What implications do these identity constructions appear to have for practitioners and for the profession?

The chapter first explains the two main foundations of my research design: my rationale for choosing SI as a methodological approach and my positioning as a researcher within the study. The second section explains my reason for choosing in-depth interviews as a research method, and then describes the procedures followed and decisions made during the data-collection process. The penultimate section explains the rationale behind the use of thematic coding to analyse the data and the procedures followed during that analysis. The final section provides a brief summary of the main points of this chapter.

## 4.2 Research design

### *4.2.1 Establishing a qualitative methodology: Symbolic Interactionism*

My choice of methodology and research method is rooted in the epistemological belief that knowledge about EAP practitioner identity can be gained by exploring practitioners' own interpretations of their experience. Rather than aiming to establish a universal reality or truth, my research questions interrogate the participants' reality with regard to their identities, and how they construct this reality. Therefore, it was important to choose a qualitative methodology which would allow the participants' own interpretations of identity to emerge, as one can only understand cultural processes by understanding the meanings held by those who share that reality (Pascale, 2011). As an interpretivist approach that views identity as socially constructed through interactions and shared meanings (Pascale, 2011), SI helps me to reveal the meanings my participants attach to discussions around the professional identity of EAP practitioners, and how they construct their identities in response to those meanings.

This belief that identity is constructed through interactions and shared meanings was also integral to my role as researcher. Since my own professional journey and the views I hold about my professional identity have influenced the way in which I interpret the issues facing the EAP profession and EAP practitioners themselves, I am very much involved in the construction of meaning within this study. Therefore, it was important to choose a methodology that would allow for the joint construction of shared meanings.

Chapter 3 has reviewed the theories that were chosen to develop an understanding of how the participants in this study reveal their identities. Six main theories have been reviewed under separate headings in order to clearly express how they have been articulated in the

literature and used in previous studies to interpret constructions of professional identity. However, the six theories overlap in multiple ways and can perhaps be framed in terms of two main SI theories: the *looking-glass self* (Cooley, 1902; 1998) and impression management (Goffman, 1959). I would argue that the *looking-glass self* underlies all of these theories because the way individuals perceive their own identities occurs in response to how they interpret the perceptions of others and then construct an identity in light of that interpretation (Cooley, 1998). For example, the labelling of individuals has an effect on how they construct their identities − in particular their 'master status' − in terms of how they *interpret* what these labels mean to other people, what these others might think about them in response to these meanings, and how the individuals then construct their own identities in response to their interpretations of others' views (Becker, 1963). For instance, if EAP practitioners believe that others view the notion of 'support' as subservient to other academic activities in universities, they may perceive the labelling of EAP as a support service to have a marginalising function and therefore construct their own identities as marginalised. Similarly, individuals who believe that their identities are stigmatised are likely to have constructed this identity in response to a looking-glass view they have formulated in which *others* view them as stigmatised.

Individuals may attempt to manage others' impressions (Goffman, 1959) in response to this looking-glass view they have constructed. This impression management may take the form of constructions of front and setting (Goffman, 1959) or presentations of face and engagement in face-work (Goffman, 1967). Individuals may also attempt to align themselves with in-groups or out-groups in response to perceptions that their identities are stigmatised in some way (Goffman, 1968). EAP practitioners may, for instance, align themselves with the in-group that views EAP as a support service, or they may attempt to

manage impressions by engaging in scholarship in order to align themselves with 'normals' – in this case traditional academics – and distance themselves from perceptions that their identity may be stigmatised. Alternatively, they may engage in subversive negotiations of face (Moore, 2017), such as participating in less-traditional forms of research like blog-writing, in order to disrupt normative views of how academic identity should be constructed, and to attempt to assert their own identities. Therefore, these theories appear to be a particularly useful framework for uncovering and further understanding what meanings EAP practitioners attach to notions of professional identity and EAP identity, and how they construct their own identities within the context of these meanings.

### *4.2.2 Researcher positioning*

As indicated above, my role as researcher is central to the design and implementation of this study. As such, I actively influence and construct the collection and interpretation of the data. This is an important aspect of the study, as I am investigating issues that are part of my lived experience and about which I have strong opinions. In research, the gathering of data is not separate from theoretical perspectives; instead "data are intricately associated with the motivation for choosing a given subject, the conduct of the study, and ultimately the analysis" (Berg and Lune, 2012:5). Because researchers' understanding of reality is subjective, we need to think about the impact of our own actions in creating reality and knowledge (Cunliffe, 2004). This critical reflexivity involves questioning our assumptions, challenging our conceptions of reality and exploring other possibilities (Cunliffe, 2004). My SI methodology is important in this regard because the principles of this framework demand that, rather than attempting to interpret what my participants are

saying as an 'objective' outsider, I examine my own positioning within that interpretation and why I might interpret the data in a particular way.

As an experienced EAP practitioner who holds certain opinions about the issues examined in this research, my experience and views form an essential part of the data gathering and interpretive process. Therefore, it is important that my position in this study is uncovered and reflexively examined. In order to account for and disclose my approach to all aspects of the research process (Anfara *et al*, 2002), I have attempted throughout this study to provide 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) – that is, as much detail as possible – of my procedures, beliefs and interpretations. In line with principles of good qualitative research, the aim of this thick description is to maintain quality and authenticity by creating an 'audit trail' of how I reached my conclusions (King and Horrocks, 2010). I have revealed my views on the issues I perceive the EAP profession to be facing and their potential effects on EAP identity, in Chapters 1 and 2. This section explains the other steps I have taken in order to maintain reflexivity throughout this study.

Reflexivity involves reflecting on assumptions made during the research process − for example, when defining the research question, writing the interview schedule and choosing a method of analysis – and also on the ways the research might be affected by my personal beliefs, experiences and identities (King and Horrocks, 2010). It also requires an openness on the part of the researcher about decisions made throughout the research process in order to enhance the authenticity of the study (Jonsen *et al*, 2018). Thus, I have attempted to reflect on my own positioning throughout the stages of the research process, although this has not always been easy; as Grace (1998) points out, being reflexive involves an "intellectual vulnerability that few want to embrace"

(1998:204). For example, in Chapter 1, I have described my own journey as an EAP practitioner and how I construct my own professional identity. This section was difficult to write because I felt the research should be about my participants, not myself, and I was perhaps afraid of exposing my views to public scrutiny and potential criticism. My readings around reflexivity and discussions with my supervisors helped me to see that this openness is essential for an interpretivist study.

Another means of maintaining reflexivity was to keep extensive notes on the research process. Throughout the project, but particularly during the transcription and data analysis phases, I noted thoughts and reflections as they occurred to me. The data analysis process required particular reflexivity because I initially kept identifying themes that resonated with *my* construction of EAP identity rather than allowing the themes to emerge from the data itself (Johnston *et al*, 1994:29), as will be discussed in the section on data analysis below. This required me to question my assumptions and open myself to the other views that were presented (Charmaz, 2011; Cunliffe, 2004).

I also engaged in opportunities to co-construct meanings related to my research through discussions with my supervisors and presenting aspects of the study at conferences (Jonsen *et al*, 2018) in order to make it "part of a community of critical discourse" (Stenhouse, 1981:17), and to reflect on comments made in response to my presentations. Another important strategy in being reflexive was to ensure the whole research process was iterative. At each stage of the process, I went through multiple iterations of writing, reflection, rewriting and further reflection (Jonsen *et al*, 2018). This process was important in order to expose "contradictions, doubts, dilemmas, and possibilities" (Cunliffe, 2004:414).

## 4.3 Data collection

### *4.3.1 Rationale for research method: In-depth interviews*

This study employed in-depth interviews in line with a qualitative, interpretivist research approach. This choice of method is rooted in the SI research principle that "human interactions form the central source of data" (Berg and Lune, 2012:12). As my aim is to examine how practitioners construct their own professional identities, I wanted a method that would focus on "the cultural, everyday, and situated aspects of human thinking, learning, knowing, acting, and ways of understanding ourselves as persons" (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015:15). It was also important to examine these aspects in some depth and to allow the voices of the practitioners themselves to be heard (Esterberg, 2002). As a researcher who is deeply connected to the subject of her study, the use of interviews would further allow me, through joint action, to co-construct knowledge with the subjects of my study (King and Horrocks, 2010).

### *4.3.2 Recruiting participants*

Although EAP is a global profession, this study was limited to practitioners in the UK for two main reasons. The first was that the scope and size of the project needed to be restricted for practical reasons, and the second was that I work in the UK and am, therefore, most interested in, experienced in and knowledgeable about EAP practice within this country. In line with principles of qualitative research, rather than choosing a large number of participants with the aim of generalising results to a larger population, the interviewees were chosen in terms of their ability to give the deepest possible insight into the subject of discussion (Esterberg, 2002). I wanted participants with differing levels of experience and knowledge of the field in order to gain a deeper understanding of different viewpoints (Esterberg, 2002) and to explore views that might be different from

my own. Volunteers were thus recruited through the BALEAP email discussion list – a discussion forum for BALEAP members. An email was sent out explaining the aims of the research and requesting volunteers with a range of experience, knowledge and qualifications. This was also to encourage volunteers who were new to the profession, and who therefore might feel they had little to offer to the discussion.

However, recruiting through the BALEAP discussion list meant limiting participants to BALEAP members, who are, by nature, likely to be more experienced. Those enrolled on the email list are also likely to be those practitioners with a certain level of engagement in the profession. A further disadvantage of this selection method was that practitioners on temporary contracts are less likely to have access to institutional membership of the organisation and might not be able to afford the fee for individual membership. In order to mitigate this difficulty, I had planned, if there was limited interest from those who were new to the profession, to contact programme convenors at universities around the country and request they disseminate my email to their temporary staff. However, this was ultimately unnecessary, as there was a reasonable range of experience and contract types among the volunteers. There were 24 responses to my call for volunteers. Of these, one person was unable to find time to meet face-to-face and did not have access to Skype, so decided to withdraw. A further six, after initial email communications, did not respond to further emails. This left me with a cohort of 17 – a reasonable number for a qualitative study of this size.

The volunteers' experience in the field ranged from one practitioner who had only worked in EAP for two pre-sessionals to those who had worked in EAP for over 20 years. Participants held qualifications ranging from an undergraduate degree and a CELTA

(Cambridge Assessment English, 2019a) to PhDs. They were employed under a variety of job titles, including ‘senior lecturer’, ‘lecturer’, ‘tutor’ and ‘teacher’, and in different settings, including academic departments, service departments, and private providers. The participants were, or had been, employed at universities in England, Scotland and Wales. An overview of the participants is provided in Appendix C.

### *4.3.3 Designing the interview schedule*

Two sources of information were used to inform the design of the interview schedule: a review of advertisements for EAP jobs at higher education institutions in the UK and the literature examining issues facing the EAP profession discussed in Chapter 2. With regard to the first source, advertisements for EAP jobs in the UK were collected over the course of a year and the job titles, contract types (permanent vs fixed-term), roles/duties and qualifications required were examined. Most of the job titles advertised referred to EAP ‘tutors’ or ‘teachers’. Only three of the positions were for EAP ‘lecturers’, and these were permanent full-time positions with duties that involved curriculum design and assessment as well as teaching, and in all three cases candidates were required to have a master’s degree. The majority of advertisements were for fixed-term contracts on summer pre-sessional courses and mainly involved teaching and marking with little to no syllabus or assessment design involved. The qualifications required for these pre-sessional roles ranged from a master’s degree and Delta (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019b) to an undergraduate degree with the CELTA (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019a) qualification. Most required EAP experience, but some indicated that training would be provided for those with limited or no experience. I used this information as a discussion point for a number of my interview questions and also referred to the positioning of EAP practitioners in the literature.

With regard to formulating the interview schedule, a number of factors required consideration, the first of which was the degree of structure by which the interviews should be constrained. An overly structured interview is likely to direct what is meaningful and relevant to the study, rather than allowing the participants to decide this for themselves (Esterberg, 2002). A structured interview would also run counter to the epistemology of this study, which emphasises the co-construction of knowledge by shedding light on different interpretations of professional identity (Pascale, 2011). Therefore, in-depth interviews were conducted using a number of questions and topics to guide proceedings but also with the freedom to evolve according to what was said (Newby, 2014) in order to gain a rich understanding of participants' beliefs about their own identities. I started with broad factual questions, which are less threatening, then asked questions about their experiences, and finally progressed to more specific questions about their opinions regarding various issues after a level of trust had been developed (Esterberg, 2002). I was interested in a number of issues that are frequently discussed in various EAP fora (as explored in Chapter 2) and how these may be tied up with practitioner identity. These issues included:

- Nomenclature – job titles and roles in EAP, and how these are related to our identity
- Professional identity – how do EAP practitioners identify themselves, for example, as teachers, a support service or academics?
- Positioning within the academy − how are practitioners positioned physically, administratively and in terms of status or feelings of belonging or collegiality?
- Scholarship – how do practitioners engage in scholarship and research, and how is this related to their identity?
- Professional knowledge – how do practitioners feel this should be obtained and demonstrated?
- The language we use to talk about ourselves (e.g. 'support') – how do practitioners feel about this language?

As discussed in Chapter 2, these issues are fairly frequently discussed in the literature (e.g. Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017; Turner, 2004) or in less formal settings including conferences (e.g. Bruce, 2017) and the BALEAP discussion list, but they are also issues that resonate with my professional experience and identity, as outlined in Chapter 1. Therefore, I prepared a list of questions related to these topics, which were consulted during the interviews. I did not necessarily ask every question on the list, and often other aspects arose during interviews which were then pursued (Forsey, 2012; Morse, 2018). With Maxwell's (2009) principle in mind that data analysis should commence at the same time as data collection in qualitative research, questions were added to the list as topics arose during the course of interviews, or as interviewees' responses led me to consider other issues. The interview schedule can be seen in Appendix B.

### *4.3.4 Conducting the interviews*

Eight interviews were conducted in person, with the remaining nine conducted via video Skype. Interviews generally lasted from 60 to 90 minutes. I had originally attempted to conduct as many interviews in person as possible in the belief that this would enable a greater rapport to be cultivated with the participants (Newby, 2014); however, as internet resources have come to be considered a viable means of overcoming issues around access and distance, Skype seemed a practical alternative that would even offer a number of advantages over face-to-face interviews (Hanna, 2012). The first advantage is that, like those conducted face-to-face, Skype interviews are synchronous, but they offer a second advantage in that Skype provides the opportunity to record audio and visual interaction without the obvious intrusion of a video camera (Hanna, 2012). The Skype interviews were recorded using free software downloaded for the purpose, and the participants were informed that they were being recorded. The face-to-face interviews were recorded with

an audio recorder rather than video to avoid the intrusive nature of a video camera. As a result, the Skype recordings provided better data for analysis in the form of non-verbal reactions as well as verbal. A third advantage of Skype relates to ethical considerations, as both the researcher and participants can take part from safe locations (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014).

In addition to those practical advantages, giving participants some control over the research process can encourage a more equal relationship between the researcher and interviewees (Hanna, 2012). Participants were therefore offered the option of a Skype interview, and often this was an agreeable alternative for them, as it was far more convenient in terms of their working schedules and the fact that they could be interviewed in their own homes (Deakin and Wakefield, 2014). This was also convenient in terms of the time and cost implications (King and Horrocks, 2010), as a number of participants lived many miles away. Apart from the initial awkwardness sometimes involved in Skype interviews, rapport did not appear to be damaged by the technology. However, a disadvantage of Skype is that technical hitches may occur (Hanna, 2012). There were two instances of technical failure during the interviews, one in which the recording software stopped working toward the end of an interview leaving part of the interview unrecorded. The other instance was when a participant was unable to get her webcam to work, which meant that the visual cues available in face-to-face interviews were lost (King and Horrocks, 2010).

The face-to-face interviews were arranged at mutually convenient locations, mostly at the participants' places of work, where they were able to arrange offices or classrooms in which to conduct the interviews in relative privacy. In two cases, interviews were

conducted in cafés. In one of these interviews, the noise in the café was such that our conversation could not be overheard, and in the other, the café was empty enough to allow us to speak privately.

During the course of the interviews, the interview schedule was used as a guide, but I also heeded Esterberg's (2002) advice that a qualitative interview should be "more like a meandering river and less like a game of ping-pong" (2002:103). Therefore, follow-up questions and probes were used, and alternative views were frequently introduced in order to generate further discussion. For example, I often posed questions that posited a particular viewpoint, and found that, rather than being led to agree with the position offered, interviewees often took a contrary stance, or questioned aspects of the posited view. Thus, this approach provided a rich source of data and a deeper insight into the views of the interviewees, as well as creating an environment in which my positioning was revealed, and participants were able to engage with that positioning, thus enabling the joint construction of meanings (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). However, as research interviews involve power asymmetry in the sense that the interviewer controls the content and direction of the interview (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015), I attempted to avoid stating my views too overtly before participants had had the opportunity to voice their own and was conscious of the need to avoid silencing their voices and to be responsive to their reactions (Cunliffe, 2004).

### *4.3.5 Ethical considerations*

Interview research is steeped in moral and ethical issues because the interviewees are affected by the interaction, and the knowledge produced affects how the human condition is understood (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). I therefore needed to consider those issues

carefully when designing my study, undertaking the interviews, and analysing and discussing the data. Approval was obtained from the University of Roehampton Ethics Committee for the study, and University of Roehampton Ethics Guidelines were carefully followed. Participants were fully informed of their rights, what the study involved, and the potential risks of engaging in qualitative research of this nature. They signed consent forms to indicate their agreement (see Appendix E and Appendix F for consent form and debriefing form). All data and personal information has been stored securely. In addition, every effort was made to preserve the anonymity of the participants during the transcription, analysis and writing up processes. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, and care was also taken to obscure the identity of their employers. When using video recordings, it is necessary to be particularly vigilant about storing them securely in order to preserve the anonymity of the subjects (King and Horrocks, 2010). Thus, both the audio and video recordings were stored in password-protected files on a password-protected computer.

Another issue that required consideration was the location of face-to-face interviews. A risk assessment was carried out as part of the application for ethical approval and the university's lone worker policy was followed. Participants were interviewed at their workplaces in fairly public areas such as cafés or classrooms, but care was taken that the interviews would not be overheard. As discussed above, interviewing by Skype was an effective means of ensuring a safe and secure interview environment.

## 4.4 Data analysis: thematic coding

### *4.4.1 Rationale*

The research literature indicates that there are many methods of analysing data (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; King and Horrocks, 2010), but the analysis of interview data generally involves four main processes: preparing the data, identifying units of data, organising the data, and interpreting the data (Newby, 2014). Thematic coding was chosen as a means of identifying and analysing units of data, as this would enable me to draw out themes from the interviews regarding how practitioners constructed their identities. In order to prepare the data for thematic coding, it was necessary to transcribe it. The following sections explain the procedures followed in transcribing the data, the decisions made and procedures followed in coding and organising the data, and the procedures followed in interpreting and writing up the analysis.

### *4.4.2 Transcription*

Before embarking on the transcription, a number of decisions needed to be made about which aspects of the interviews would be transcribed, as written data will never completely capture what occurred during an interview (McLellan *et al*, 2003). Researchers can either transcribe the interviews verbatim and in full, or with less detail, depending on the purpose of the study (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015; King and Horrocks, 2010). As this is an interpretivist study, I did not attempt a verbatim transcription of every word or include vocal fillers such as ‘um’. I used ‘denaturalised transcription’, which, rather than focusing on every detail of speech, aims for accuracy in terms of “the substance of the interview, that is, the meanings and perceptions created and shared during a conversation” (Oliver *et al*, 2005:1277). Paralinguistic aspects, such as tone or laughter, were only included when they had an impact on the meaning of what was said

(King and Horrocks, 2010). For example, the exclamation, “It’s great!”, might have an entirely different meaning if delivered with a falling intonation – suggesting a sarcastic tone – than if delivered with a rising intonation – suggesting enthusiasm. Thus, if a particular tone was discerned, this was noted. Those interviews which were only captured in audio form were transcribed as soon as possible afterwards so as to record any non-verbal reactions that might affect meaning (Esterberg, 2002; King and Horrocks, 2010). I also noted when sections of speech were inaudible or unclear, rather than attempting to guess what had been said (King and Horrocks, 2010) and only ‘tidied up’ language error or mispronunciations when necessary in order to aid comprehension (King and Horrocks, 2010). A further cautionary measure was to omit any information that could identify the interviewees (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

I felt that it was important to transcribe the data myself, both as a stage of early analysis and to gain an insight into my interviewing style (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Through transcribing the interviews, I was reminded of social and emotional aspects of the interview and was able to record notes about potential themes as I was transcribing (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). Language that has been transcribed loses much of its specific meaning, and its intent may be damaged. Therefore, analysis took place both before, during and after transcription, and, when analysing the transcripts, I frequently referred back to their original recorded form in order to maintain authenticity in my analysis (Morse, 2018).

### *4.4.3 Coding*

The first decision that needed to be made was the source of the code. Newby (2014) suggests three sources of codes: using a code devised by someone else, devising one’s

own code based on existing knowledge before data collection, or using the data to devise a coding structure. As this study involved a basic set of interview questions used as a starting point for the interviews, it was expected that themes would emerge that aligned with those questions. In line with King and Horrocks' (2010) advice, the coding process took place in three stages. Although described here in a linear manner, the coding was iterative, involving many attempts at coding and recoding at the three different levels. The first stage, descriptive coding, involved labelling pieces of data that might be helpful in answering the research questions. Stage 2, interpretive coding, involved grouping descriptive codes that might have a common meaning and then attempting to capture this meaning in the form of an interpretive code. The final stage was to identify the main themes that emerged from the interpretive coding (King and Horrocks, 2010). I coded on the transcripts, highlighting different codes in different colours and using the comment function to label these codes and add comments.

The initial focus on coding according to the themes of the interview questions caused some difficulties, however. Coding according to these topics constrained my thinking in that themes were identified in line with *my* views on professional identity rather than those of my participants. Esterberg (2002) advises the researcher *not* to use pre-established codes, warning that "you will impose your own sense of what *ought* to be there in the data and may very well miss what *is* there" (2002:158 original emphasis), which appeared to be exactly what I had done. Therefore, I heeded her advice and attempted to recode by being more open to the data (Esterberg, 2002), by questioning my own assumptions about what EAP identity is, and by highlighting themes that seemed important to my interviewees rather than those that resonated with me. This open coding allowed certain themes to emerge, and I was then able to return to the data and engage in

more focused coding, looking for key themes in particular (Esterberg, 2002). Each piece of data was compared with the others as the process unfolded so that similar phenomena could be coded in the same way (Strauss and Corbin, 2004). I then created separate documents so that I could copy and paste data revealing key themes under specific headings. At this stage, I also engaged in interpretive coding and was mindful of what my SI theories might be able to offer in terms of interpreting what the interviewees were saying.

It took repeated attempts at coding, analysis, recoding and reanalysis before I arrived at my final themes. The main difficulty faced in arriving at these final themes was obtaining a balance between having rich and complex analysis but also having clearly defined themes (King and Horrocks, 2010). This was a laborious process, but the advantage was that it gave me a very thorough knowledge of the data, which is important for interpretation (Anfara *et al*, 2002). My method of coding and making notes on the texts was messy, but a more systematic method, such as tabulating my codes, would have been too constraining and would not have allowed the themes to emerge. An example of the stages in the process of coding, and the final themes that were identified, is provided in Appendix D.

### *4.4.4 Writing up the analysis and discussion*

During the last stage of the coding process, I attempted to draw on SI theories in interpreting my data (King and Horrocks, 2010). This then informed the writing up of the analysis and the discussion of the data. The main themes were described and discussed in turn, and direct quotes from the transcripts were used in order to exemplify each theme (King and Horrocks, 2010) and to ensure that the analysis was supported by the data

(Esterberg, 2002). The SI theories explored in Chapter 3 were used in order to illuminate how participants revealed aspects of their professional identity, noting Morse's (2018) caution that "[p]erceived reality is experienced reality" (2018:806). As mentioned above, this whole process was iterative, which meant that even while writing up, I was engaging in further coding and interpretation, followed by repeated revisions of the chapter.

## 4.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has set out my rationale for selecting a qualitative interview-based methodology in terms of the aims of the study and the research philosophy underlying this choice. I have argued that the SI theories reviewed in Chapter 3 provide a useful means of illuminating and revealing the meanings EAP practitioners attach to professional identity, and how they construct their identities in response to these meanings. I have discussed my positioning and attempts I made to maintain a reflexive stance throughout the project by revealing my own views on the issues discussed and probing the assumptions made and decisions taken throughout the research process. The second section explained that in-depth interviews were selected as a research method because they appeared to be the most effective means − from an interpretivist perspective − of revealing knowledge about professional identity and thereby answering the research questions. In addition, this section detailed the decisions taken and procedures followed in recruiting participants, designing the interview schedule and conducting the interviews. It also explained the measures taken to ensure that this study was ethically sound. The third section provided a reflexive account of the stages of analysis, including decisions around transcription, methods of coding and difficulties encountered during the process. The following two chapters present a detailed analysis and discussion of the findings of my study.

# CHAPTER 5: POSITIONING, MARGINALISATION AND RECOGNITION

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter and Chapter 6 examine the findings from the data generated from in-depth interviews conducted with 17 EAP practitioners. Drawing on the key SI theories outlined in Chapter 3, they aim to shed light on the meanings participants attach to notions of professional identity and to the issues discussed in the EAP literature, and on how the participants construct their identities in the light of these meanings. My coding procedure, described in Chapter 4, uncovered seven main themes emerging from the data. This chapter discusses the first four themes: how practitioners position and identify themselves, how constructions of the field as marginalised may be related to its positioning within higher education, how a perceived lack of understanding of EAP affects practitioners' identity constructions, and how practitioners may set boundaries between EAP and EFL in order to position their identities more clearly within higher education.

## 5.2 How practitioners position and identify themselves

This section examines how participants positioned themselves with relation to notions of professional identity and how they expressed their own identities. Since I identify as a professional and an academic, and have, to some extent, constructed my own professional identity in response to conceptualisations of professionals in the literature, I wanted to explore how my participants constructed their own identities, and how these might relate to conceptualisations of the professions. My rationale for this is that, although the features associated with the professions discussed in Chapter 2 are not unproblematic, they nevertheless provide a useful means of framing issues facing EAP professionals today. It

may also be worth considering how conceptualisations of certain fields as *not* being professions might be a means of marginalising those fields − particularly for the purposes of saving money in a neoliberal economic context − by awarding employees in those fields inferior contracts, pay and working conditions.

Attempts to conceptualise the nature of a profession over the years have tended to assign academics to the professions in a fairly unproblematic way (Vanderstraeten, 2007), which may shed light on Ding and Bruce's (2017) argument that EAP tends to be viewed as either an academic field or a support service. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ding and Bruce's (2017) two possible perspectives of EAP are the 'outsider view' of EAP as a profit-making support activity, and the 'insider view' of EAP as a research-informed academic field. Thus, viewing EAP as an academic field may position it as a profession, while the alternative support service model may not. Designating these perspectives 'outsider' or 'insider' might appear to imply that EAP practitioners have a homogenous 'collective identity' (Johnston et al, 1994), but as Ding and Bruce (2017) note, EAP practitioners and managers themselves may hold the outsider or institutional view they describe. This seems to be borne out by the responses of my participants, who appeared to align themselves with different models and also indicated overlapping conceptions. Becker's (1963) notion of 'master status' – the core identity that individuals ascribe to themselves − might be helpful in illuminating these alignments. Practitioners who view their master status as being a practitioner in an academic field might resist auxiliary status traits that they associate with the view of EAP as a profit-making support activity, such as being positioned within a 'support' or 'services' department or being perceived as having an income-generation function. Those who view their master status as that of support

service, on the other hand, may resist auxiliary status traits associated with academia, such as the job title 'lecturer' or the need to engage in research.

Therefore, it seemed a useful starting point to ask participants how they conceptualised the professions, whether they considered themselves to be professionals, and how they would describe their own professional identity. It was hoped that this framing would help shed light on the meanings that they attach to other issues of professional identity by creating a sense of how interviewees viewed their master status, and whether there was evidence of collective identities through shared meanings of what it means to be a professional and an EAP practitioner. Hence, in this section, I examine participants' responses to these questions in terms of how they might begin to reveal whether there is a shared identity of EAP as an academic field, as suggested by Ding and Bruce (2017), or whether practitioners might align themselves with the 'outsider view' of EAP as a support service.

### *5.2.1 Positioning within conceptualisations of the professional*

Two broad, and surprisingly consistent, themes emerged from participants' conceptualisations of professionals. The first was that professionals have a certain level of knowledge or expertise, which they sometimes related to qualifications, as suggested in the responses below:

> It's not just about what you do; it's also about some of the training and the qualifications that sit around it
>
> - Pete

> I think I would possibly associate professional with something that has required a certain level of study […] I think it's also just having an area of expertise, and that's something we do as EAP
>
> - Paul

> A professional may have various accolades and training that allow them to be professional
>
> - Beth

> I think that to be a professional you need to have knowledge of your subject area
>
> - Maria

There seemed, therefore, to be an emphasis on training and qualifications in their conceptualisations. As discussed in Chapter 2, there has been a great deal of discussion in EAP, particularly in the last few years, around the appropriate training − and the qualifications attached to this training − for EAP practitioners (e.g. BALEAP, 2008; Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017). As EAP is a relatively new profession, many practitioners appear to have drifted into it by accident rather than choosing EAP as a specific career goal − as exemplified by the informants in Bell's (2016) study, who almost all described not having consciously chosen a career in EAP. The participants in this study reflect the tendency for EAP practitioners to have a rather eclectic range of qualifications and teaching experience. Of the 17 participants, only two did not have a master's degree, and, at the other end of the spectrum, there were three PhD holders (one of whom had completed two PhDs), and one who was about to submit her PhD thesis for examination. The majority of master's degrees completed were in Applied Linguistics, TESOL or a related field, but some were in unrelated areas. Most participants also held some sort of TESOL teaching qualification such as the CELTA or Delta (Cambridge Assessment English, 2019). However, just one was, at that time, enrolled on a Master's in Teaching English for Academic Purposes (MA TEAP), the only EAP-specific qualification among the interviewees. Many participants had started their teaching careers in EFL, although there were those who had been school teachers, had taught another language, or had started in a different career entirely.

In line with their view that being a professional required a certain level of study, a number of participants echoed the view expressed by the 'big names' interviewed for Bell's (2016) study that EAP practitioners should be educated to master's level. Those who held this view indicated that the experience of postgraduate study was the most valuable knowledge attached to these degrees, and that EAP practitioners needed this experience in order to be effective in their jobs, as suggested in the following examples:

> I think the master's is a good idea. I'm personally very glad that I've got a PhD […] A PhD is useful when you stand up in front of a lecture theatre full of 80 PhD candidates; it's useful when you stand up in front of staff, but I think it's most useful in getting you to write and write and write…because, again this one of the things I feel very strongly about, I work with a lot of people who don't write and have zero interest in writing, and how can you be a French teacher without speaking French? But you can be a writing teacher without picking up a pen for years on end
>
> - Steve (PhD holder)

> I think anyone teaching EAP needs to have a master's in any degree just so that they're used to doing thorough academic writing, research and practice. I think it's paramount that people who teach academic literacy (to use another loaded term!) are academically literate themselves. Pre-sessional colleagues who don't have an MA have much more difficulty coping with teaching a pre-sessional than those who do have an MA
>
> - Ingrid (master's holder)

These participants appear to attach the value of postgraduate study to the Mode 2 knowledge obtained thereby, rather than as an example of 'front' (Goffman, 1959) in the form of an insignia of rank indicating their professional status. This view of postgraduate *experience* as valuable for classroom practice might suggest that they have constructed what I call 'effective teacher' identities as a core identity, or master status. This identity will be examined further in the next section. However, some did seem to view these higher-level qualifications as an impression management tool that could be used by practitioners to present a more academic 'face' or 'front' (Goffman, 1959:1967). For

example, the following response suggests a desire to manage impressions within the academy, and therefore achieve greater recognition:

> Doing a qualification shows that you recognise TEFL as a profession, as a career, and shows commitment to the field as well. And I think it shows respect for the field because I think we've suffered for a while, especially in English Language Teaching as a whole, of ELT not being a profession as such – you do it when you're a backpacker. I think EAP faces similar and additional challenges – how you're seen in the university as a whole construct
>
> - Kim

Kim suggests that EAP, like ELT in general, is stigmatised as an activity you do "when you're a backpacker" rather than viewed as a profession. This *looking-glass self* view of EAP as having a stigmatised identity will be explored in a later section, but it seems that Kim views qualifications as a means of managing the impressions of others in the academy and thereby mitigating this stigmatised identity.

Thus, although a number of practitioners appeared to view training or qualifications as either an important means of obtaining the knowledge required for the job, or as insignias of rank (Goffman, 1959) indicating professional status, it did not appear clear what these qualifications should be. As discussed in Chapter 2, this issue has received a great deal of attention in EAP circles in recent years. EAP job advertisements exhibit a wide variety of requirements, from the minimum requirement of an undergraduate degree and a CELTA – usually only specified for temporary summer pre-sessional jobs, which universities often have trouble filling because of the intense demand for these courses during a short period of the year – to the more usual requirement of a Delta and a master's degree, reflecting the dual nature of EAP as requiring both pedagogical and academic knowledge. However, the lack of EAP-specific knowledge attached to either of these qualifications is often problematised. In Bell's (2016) study, all of his informants indicated that they would

welcome more EAP-specific qualifications, despite not having them themselves and being highly successful in their careers without them. When asked directly about the need for an EAP-specific qualification, some of my participants saw this as a valuable development:

> Well, it would be good if qualifications were EAP-based rather than just general English. That's really all I have at the moment. The next step is to take a certificate in EAP and then maybe a diploma in the same area
>
> - Graham

However, they also highlighted the difficulty of combining the need for pedagogical knowledge with 'academic' knowledge:

> This is really difficult, isn't it? If there was an easy way of doing this, master's would have more teaching practice in them, and CELTAs perhaps wouldn't be so intense, and you'd have some kind of CPD on the tail end of that. I think it would be taking the best of those CELTA, Diploma, Master's, portfolio and bringing them together and giving theory and practice an equal footing
>
> - Rebecca

> I personally think, but then it's my qualification so I don't know if I'm just saying that myself, but a PGCE and an MA in Applied Linguistics would be better [than a Delta]. I think it's broader; I think the PGCE gives the foundation in terms of teaching pedagogy, from philosophy of education right through to professionalism of teaching, assessment and curriculum. If you study Applied Linguistics, you also get the in-depth knowledge of the subject
>
> - Sue

There thus seems to be a view that both academic knowledge and pedagogical knowledge are important, and some participants proposed a sort of apprenticeship model whereby teachers would receive on-the-job training, suggesting that they attach similar meanings to the notion presented in the literature that professionals need both Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge (Hegarty, 2000). There also seemed to be a link to the interviewees' own identities in their comments, as indicated by Sue's remark that the qualifications she was

recommending were those she herself had completed. As suggested above, the emphasis on teaching knowledge seems to reveal a master status of 'effective teacher', although there is also an indication that some have constructed academic identities in the sense that their postgraduate study provides them with academic experience. The notion of the importance of teaching skills will be examined further in the section below on practitioners' own professional identity.

The second main theme was the notion that professionals need to continue developing throughout their careers, and therefore experience and development were associated with being a professional, as exemplified by the following comments:

> It's also a certain attitude that they look to continue to be good at what they do, not 'I know it and it's done', so whether that's through further training or simply awareness as they gain experience, they continue to develop ways to be better at what they do
>
> - Beth

> You need to be ready to advance in your career and to continue studying and continue learning […] I believe that it has a lot to do with your experience
>
> - Maria

There are clear themes of continuing professional development and learning through experience in these comments. These conceptualisations may shed light on participants' beliefs about how their own training and experience influence aspects of their professional identities, which will be examined further in later themes.

In terms of how participants positioned themselves, 13 interviewees seemed fairly unequivocal in responding that they considered themselves to be professionals, suggesting that they believed they had the necessary 'training', 'qualifications', 'expertise', 'knowledge', 'training' or 'level of study' mentioned in their

conceptualisations of professionals. However, one participant had a very specific conceptualisation, which she said did not apply to herself:

> For me, for example, if you have a Chartered Institute, you have exams; you have very clear career progression, and you have something that's very tightly controlled, very robust, and that is when I think you can say that you have a profession, when you have that type of…it's to do with qualifications, I suppose. So, *real* teachers, doctors, lawyers, these people all have very clear career progression, and I still don't see that happening in EAP
>
> - Emily

She appeared to view school teachers as 'real teachers', so I asked what made these teachers professionals, and she responded:

> Teachers who work in state schools have a teaching qualification rather than people that work in academies with nowt
>
> - Emily

She makes a very clear connection between qualifications and professional status, suggesting she has constructed her identity in response to traditional views of the professions. This notion of '*real* teachers' in contrast to EAP practitioners appears to suggest that she does not see EAP practitioners as real teachers, but when asked how she viewed her own professional identity, she replied:

> I see myself as a teacher, and a teacher-trainer – Emily

This apparent contradiction highlights the complex nature of EAP practitioner identity and how labels or qualifications do not necessarily align with how practitioners view themselves. This may be related to the lack of a clear EAP career path, as Emily seems to suggest. There were also three more nuanced responses to the question of whether interviewees regarded themselves as professionals. Ingrid appeared to align herself more

with the notion of an 'emerging professional' because she was new to EAP and expressed the view that development was an important component of being a professional:

> To me the word evokes thoughts of doing your job and doing your job well. It also has an element of development, not necessarily structured, but that you strive to develop with others. I think of myself as fitting the description I just gave. I might be hesitant to call myself a professional because I haven't been doing this job for very long. I might go back to the ideas of communities of practice and emerging professionals
>
> - Ingrid

This reflects the conceptualisations discussed above of professionals continuously developing and learning through experience. Ingrid appears to be engaging in face-work, perhaps to avoid being perceived as having 'ideas above her station', reflecting a possible belief that the status of professional needs to be earned. This may be a *looking-glass self* construction in reaction to the imagined response of others if she positioned herself as a professional. In the second nuanced response, the interviewee also appears to be engaging in face-work to distance himself from any suggestion that he might be concerned about status:

> I'd like to be a professional in the sense that *I* like the word. I wouldn't want to be a professional in the sense that other people use that word. There's a bit of inverted snobbery there […] anybody who wears a smart suit likes to call himself a professional. It's a word that gets bandied about a lot and loses a lot of real meaning, which is used as a kind of status symbol to say that I am something better than you
>
> - Graham

Graham appears to be attempting to manage impressions in the sense that he identifies with certain meanings he attaches to the notion of being a professional but appears to have constructed a *looking-glass self* identity in response to a fear that others may position him in the "anybody who wears a smart suit" category, or that they may view him as

thinking he is better than others. The third participant who did not position himself as a professional seemed reluctant to even consider the notion that he might be one:

> It's a job that has a body of knowledge attached to it, isn't it? And that has certification. I believe that's the...I don't think about it much; I don't think about what that means to be a professional […] Am I a professional? Eugh, God! No, I couldn't really answer that without a definition of what it meant
>
> - Mike

In the light of later comments suggesting he is anxious to avoid being seen as status-seeking (which are discussed in the section on marginalised identities below), it is possible that he saw my question as a face threat, and his response was an example of face-work used to distance himself from any notion that he might be status conscious.

Apart from these four interviewees, there was a strong sense amongst participants that they viewed their master status as that of professionals, and thereby conceptualised EAP practitioners as having the associated auxiliary traits of specialist knowledge and a commitment to continuing to develop over the course of their careers. This may be helpful in developing a picture of certain shared meanings among the EAP practitioners and how interviewees constructed their identities in line with, or separate from, those shared meanings. As mentioned above, in discussions of what it means to be a professional, there were also references to the importance of pedagogical knowledge and to effective teacher identities, which will be explored further in the next section.

### *5.2.2 How practitioners identified themselves*

When asked, a number of participants identified themselves as 'teachers', and this core identity was apparent through many of the topics discussed in the interviews. It seemed to represent, to an extent, a collective identity that interviewees were proud of. This

identity as teachers, and as effective teachers in particular, seems to be a form of boundary maintenance through which participants appeared to "construct the collective 'we'" (Johnston *et al*, 1994:15) of EAP, in that many EAP practitioners may be denied an academic identity through administrative positioning in non-academic departments, or through teaching-only contracts, but that their identity as effective teachers was something that could not be challenged. For example, although the following participant described her main identity as that of course director, she also appeared to emphasise her identity as a teacher:

> There's a lot more to it. I suppose the other key word would be practitioner; I'm very much hands-on in the classroom and I certainly want to keep an element of that at all stages
>
> - Maureen

The following example highlights how the teacher identity may be constructed as something valued and of equal status to other academic identities, even though EAP is often positioned in support service departments:

> I see myself as a teacher, and I think there's a reason we all pick the term 'teacher'. I think there's something there where we see our role as giving [...] students the understanding and the skills they need to succeed, so that to me is a direct fit with HE because very few students come in with that, even the cleverest in your native language, there are always ways they can do better [...]. It should be on equal footing with other academics. Here at X University, we're sort of put in this weird student support side of it
>
> - Beth

The notion of EAP as 'support' rather than an academic activity will be discussed later in the section on marginalisation, but Beth seems to position her master status as that of teacher, and she appears to value that status and to have a *looking-glass self* perception that it is not on equal footing with other academic activities. She also constructs this

identity as collective: “we all pick the term ‘teacher’”. Her belief that “we see our role as giving” hints at a moral meaning attached to the notion of service, which may be at odds with an increased tendency for universities to view student support as a marketing tool. The following comment hints at the power relations connected to the use of the word ‘teacher’, but the interviewee also seems to see her master status as that of teacher:

> If you ask me what I do, I would say “I’m a teacher”. I don’t think people at university like to be called teacher. For me it’s just a title
>
> - Maria

The meanings attached to different job titles will be discussed in the later section, ‘How we talk about ourselves’, but here Maria hints at the meanings people attach to these labels. She appears to construct her identity as based on what she does, rather than on labels that may be attached to her job. The face she presents is that of teacher and she may be attempting to manage impressions by distancing herself from people who do not like to be called teacher. As mentioned above, in addition to the theme of practitioners identifying as teachers, they often appeared to position themselves as effective teachers. There was also a sense of joy and satisfaction in participants’ descriptions of their teaching and teacher identities, as the following comment exemplifies:

> Having been a school teacher, to go into a classroom where the students, in the main, want to be there, want you to be there, and want an interaction, a conversation with you, not only as a teacher but as a human being. I can’t think of a nicer place to be honest with you […] even at my advanced age, students seem to like my teaching and I get very high marks on my feedback
>
> - Steve

Despite the self-deprecating remark about his age, Steve seems to construct his master status as that of an effective teacher and appears proud of this identity. This effective

teacher identity sometimes appeared to be constructed in relation to the ELT/EFL background of many EAP practitioners, as these comments exemplify:

> When I did the peer observation with media lecturers, […] they said "wow, you know, the stuff you're doing in the class is great", and I don't think I'm a great teacher, but I've got that ELT background. For them they saw quality teaching
>
> - Rebecca

> In our department there's been a push towards getting the other lecturers more up-to-date and more supporting of their students. And it's one of those things that you feel that EAP tutors are already very good at […] It's funny how they call on the EFL team with all their expertise in this area to help with improving the NSS scores… and it's funny that support is becoming more valued academically
>
> - Sue

In both examples, the 'effective teacher' identity appears to be a source of pride, and an aspect of their 'face' that seems to position them as superior to other academics who may not have had the benefit of pedagogical training. The fact that being a teacher seems to be an important part of EAP practitioner identity – a kind of collective identity (Johnston *et al*, 1994) − may go some way to explaining why certain practitioners do not object to being positioned differently from other academics, or use this identity to justify their different positioning, as will be explored later. The following response suggests that, as in the examples above, identifying as an effective teacher may be a type of face-work, in that it gives value to an identity that is sometimes perceived as marginalised:

> Maybe we need to adjust our view [of lecturers] – old men in tweed jackets reading out notes in massive halls, when in fact they're actually good teachers *too*. I wonder if that's a misinformed holdover, and some sort of internal pride thing – ok they g*et all* the recognition, but they're lecturers and I'm a *real* teacher, and I'm doing it right. There might be something in identifying with that as: 'Sure I'm not paid what I deserve, and sure no-one knows what I do, but I *teach!*'
>
> - Beth

Their identities as effective teachers, therefore, may give EAP practitioners self-worth in the face of the marginalising effects of inferior contracts and a lack of understanding of what they do.

There was also sometimes a tension between teacher identity and academic identity, which may be illuminated by the notion of 'face'. 'Face', according to Goffman (1967), is not the same as identity because the image projected may not be consistent with what individuals consider their real selves to be. In some participant responses, there appeared to be a tension between the desire to present an academic 'face' while still maintaining the core identity, or master status, of teacher, which, as suggested above, seemed to be a source of pride. In response to the question regarding how she would describe her own professional identity, the following participant articulates these two identities quite clearly:

> Whether it's some sort of linguistics, language lecturer… I'd have to have a broad category. [ST: And you'd pick lecturer?]. I'd pick that more in terms of a job title but underneath that, I just feel like a teacher. That's how I understand what I do on a daily basis. And that's the same whether I was teaching 5-year-olds in Portugal or foundation year students now. The lecturer as job title is the academic identity
>
> - Sue

She makes a clear distinction between the job title as academic face, and her personal identity as a teacher. However, some interviewees problematised the academic job title of lecturer because the meaning they attached to this title of someone who holds forth to a hall full of students conflicted with their identities as effective teachers, as the following comment suggests:

> So many of us are getting PhDs and getting so highly specialised – there should be some signifier for that, so the titles are important…But it's not just important for me and my colleagues but for the field and people coming into it, this should be recognised. But then you were laughing earlier because without too much hesitation I felt my role was EAP teacher. And that's very important to me, partly because to me a lecturer is someone who delivers lectures, and I'm happy to take that title if that's what I do, but I'm not a lecturer, I'm teaching
>
> - Beth (EAP lecturer)

Thus, there seems to be a tension between the academic identity, or the academic face some participants want to present, and the effective teacher identity, which gives them self-worth. The relationship between job titles and EAP identity will be further discussed in the later section on stigmatisation.

The desire to present an academic face was also reflected in discussions around qualifications, particularly PhDs, but there again appeared to be a tension between the academic face one might present as a PhD holder, and the limited value such a qualification may be perceived to have for those who identify as teachers, as in the following example:

> I think people will take you more seriously in a university context if you're a doctor […] I would hate to be stopped by the fact that I haven't got a doctorate in that I've got colleagues who do, and I don't think they're any better off for it. Because your doctorate is in such a specific area, even if it's related to your teaching, it doesn't mean that that is actually going to help your global holistic experience. There is a status that comes with a doctorate
>
> - Paul

There were a number of similar comments in the data, which implies that those interviewees aligned themselves with a teaching identity rather than an academic one, but as Paul suggests, this may be in conflict with a desire to present a more academic face through insignias of rank such as PhDs.

Another complexity of EAP identity that was reflected in some comments (and is apparent from the EAP literature) is its interdisciplinary nature. Practitioners may come to EAP from very different backgrounds, and within their EAP practice, they tend to work with different disciplines. The following comment reflects this:

> Who am I? […] I'm a mixture of things because I started out as a literary scholar. I never wanted to teach, but then I got into teaching. I was still obviously doing my first PhD in Literature, but that was not something I was teaching at the time. At the time I was teaching English and Russian, so I was teaching languages. Then I became a teacher trainer, and then I became an applied linguist who was working with literature. Now I'm in EAP, so I'm somehow somewhere…I don't know…I'm a cross-breed
>
> - Ildiko

In an early opinion piece on EAP as a profession, Wilkinson (2001) positioned EAP outside of the professions because, he argued, professions are discipline-based and EAP is multidisciplinary. This does appear to create a tension within EAP because the field is often viewed as a teaching practice that draws on other disciplines, such as Applied Linguistics, rather than as an academic discipline. There also sometimes seems to be a sense, perhaps unfounded, that so-called academics specialise in one field and therefore have one identity, while EAP practitioners are frequently 'cross-breeds' coming into the discipline from a variety of backgrounds, making it difficult to construct shared meanings of what EAP identity is.

This perceived lack of a clear disciplinary space also relates to the liminal nature of EAP, caught between EFL and academia, and also between a positioning as a support service *versus* that of an academic field. This seemed to result in the construction of hybrid identities that appeared to embrace both academic and effective teacher identities. For

example, the following participant describes himself as academic, but links this identity to teaching practice:

> I consider myself to be one of the more academic members of staff – I've presented at conferences; I'm part of the Applied Linguistics Club […] At the end of the day a large part of the role of the EAP practitioner − and I think that is a good word to use − is delivery, and I think research-led and research-informed delivery is something to which everyone should both initially aspire and then should perform. I see a clear role for pure EAP academics, so I'm quite happy with the concept of someone who is researching EAP and is perhaps not classroom active, though I think probably research is somewhat informed if you have some classroom time
>
> - Pete

The section on scholarship in Chapter 6 examines how participants identified scholarly activity as an area that is bound up with their EAP identities, but here Pete connects the academic nature of EAP and the practical teaching that occurs. He appears to view himself as an academic and scholarship as an important part of his identity and the practice of EAP, suggesting a hybrid academic/teacher identity. The following participant also appears to highlight the hybrid teacher/academic nature of the EAP practitioner:

> I definitely consider myself to be a professional, and that's a really important part of my work and my identity. I think that's because I do have many years of teaching experience and many years of university experience. I've done a lot of studying. I'm at the end of a PhD. In my PhD I've argued that EAP is a field that is worthy of respect. It's not just an outside operation or something secondary to other studies. It is a field in its own right, a professional field
>
> - Jane

Jane used the word 'professional' frequently during the interview, and here, as well as in response to other questions during the interview, seems very engaged in managing outsiders' impressions of EAP in order to maintain its academic and professional face. This may be in response to a *looking-glass self* view she appears to have constructed of EAP perhaps not being viewed as 'worthy of respect' but rather as an 'outside operation'.

The following participant also suggests that her activities are an impression management technique:

> I'm an EAP practitioner, and I operate within the field of EAP and strive to perform at the best level I can within that, so taking part in initiatives like the BALEAP TEAP Competency Accreditation scheme, that sort of thing, searching for ways to kind of rubber stamp that belief that I'm part of a wider profession
>
> - Rebecca

As discussed in Chapter 2, the TEAP Fellowship scheme is an EAP-specific accreditation scheme based on the HEA Fellowship "that encourages and recognises the continuing professional development of individual BALEAP members" (BALEAP, 2019e), and is one of the attempts made by BALEAP to professionalise the field of EAP. Rebecca's use of the term 'EAP practitioner', rather than 'teacher', and her participation in the TEAP, suggest that she is engaging in face-work in order to validate her own identity, and that of EAP as a profession in its own right, rather than attempting to identify herself (and EAP) within existing categories such as 'teacher' or 'academic'.

There were also those interviewees who overtly stated that they identified as teachers and not as academics, as in the following example:

> ST: How did you feel about that [being moved from an academic department to Corporate Services]?
> Didn't bother me at all. I had only been here about 6 months, and I'm not an academic, so it doesn't worry me.
> […]
> I see myself as a teacher and a teacher-trainer
>
> - Emily

As mentioned earlier, EAP practitioners may respond to the liminal nature of EAP by identifying as effective teachers. In other words, this master status gives them an identity

they feel comfortable with and may feel proud of, and perhaps makes it easier for them to find a place for themselves in higher education. Identifying as teachers rather than academics may be a type of face-work in response to a perception that EAP has a marginalised status in the university:

> Universities by their nature are very very status conscious – you need to have lots of pieces of paper – so I'm at the very bottom at the end of the scale, and I'll accept that; I don't mind that. I don't really care about that as long as I'm enjoying what I'm doing. Maybe one day I will progress. I'm certainly taking one or two steps in that direction. And when I have one or two more scraps of paper to wave about, then perhaps I can look down on other people instead of them looking down on me
> […]
> Well, really we're only teachers. We're not in the same league as a university lecturer. We're not there to impart bodies of knowledge. We're language teachers really
>
> - Graham

Graham appears to acknowledge that "scraps of paper" are an impression management technique that will allow him to "look down on other people", and he seems to have constructed a *looking-glass self* in response to perceptions that he is looked down upon, but also seems to want to distance himself from being seen to be status-seeking. This may be related to the fact that he was very new to EAP (although he had EFL experience), and perhaps felt insecure in his positioning within the field. His use of the words "we're only teachers" seems to indicate a *looking-glass self* construction of EAP identity which is in conflict with his claim that he does not care about status as long as he enjoys what he is doing. This apparently contradictory view highlights the often conflicting identities of EAP practitioners, and the difficulties they may have in finding their place within the academy. Finally, the ways in which participants positioned and identified themselves may help to shed light on other themes that emerged from the data, since whether they constructed their identities as teachers in a support role or academics may help to explain

why some interviewees positioned themselves as marginalised or stigmatised, while others did not.

### 5.3 The positioning of EAP and marginalised identities

The positioning of EAP as a marginalised profession was a theme that ran through much of the interview data, both in terms of participants who expressed feelings of marginalisation and those who resisted this conceptualisation. Ding and Bruce's (2017) argument that EAP tends to be viewed as either an academic field or a support service may be useful in examining the participants' responses to the notion of marginalisation. As discussed above and in Chapter 2, practitioners may position themselves differently with regard to Ding and Bruce's (2017) notions of an 'outsider view' of EAP as a profit-making support activity, and the 'insider view' of EAP as a research-informed academic field. Some participants in this study appeared to align themselves with the academic field model, but there also appeared to be some resistance to the notion that viewing EAP as a support service has a marginalising or stigmatising effect, suggesting that practitioners attach different meanings to these notions. Practitioners who view their master status as that of a practitioner in an academic field might resist auxiliary status traits that they associate with the view of EAP as a profit-making support activity. Likewise, those who have constructed a master status that aligns with the 'support service' model, may resist auxiliary traits associated with the academic field model.

This section examines participants' views on whether the physical and administrative positioning of EAP could have a marginalising function, and whether their views might be related to whether they align themselves with the 'academic field' or the 'profit-making support service' model of EAP (Ding and Bruce, 2017). Becker's (1963) labelling

theory (including the notion of a 'master status'), Cooley's (1902, 1998) *looking-glass self*, and Goffman's (1959, 1967) notions of 'face-work', 'front' and 'setting' are used to shed light on how participants constructed their identities in response to the meanings they attach to their positioning.

### *5.3.1 The marginalising effect of administrative or physical positioning*

One theme that emerged was the sense that interviewees *did* appear to feel marginalised by their administrative or physical positioning within the academy. Those who expressed this view sometimes appeared to attach an othering or deprofessionalising function to their positioning within non-academic departments, which might suggest that they view their master status as that of an academic. However, their responses reveal complex and shifting meanings in terms of how they express their identities in response to their positioning. One meaning expressed was that administrative positioning in a non-academic department had a clearly marginalising function, as the following comment exemplifies:

> When I started here 3 years ago, we felt very much part of the department − the languages side of the department, which has French, German, TESOL and Applied Linguistics − but there's been a move to create this separate commercial unit. There's this attempt to pull the Language Centre out of the department. There's been quite a lot of resentment. We felt as a group really pushed out
>
> \- Sue

There is a strong sense here − from phrases Sue uses to describe the move, such as 'pull out' and 'pushed out', juxtaposed with feeling 'very much part of' the academic department they are to be moved from − that the repositioning is an attempt to change their function to a more commercial one, and thereby marginalise them, which suggests that Sue positions her master status in terms of belonging to an academic department

rather than a profit-making support service. There are also suggestions, from her use of the words 'pushed' and 'pulled', that a lack of agency contributes to the feelings of marginalisation. In a similar vein, the following comment suggests that the meaning the interviewee has attached to her department's physical and administrative positioning is that of being marginalised:

> In terms of physical location, we are not on campus per se; we're not next to the School of Business or Education […] you do feel a little bit on the periphery. We're in Corporate Services, or Learning Services? Do you know what, I'm not entirely sure. It's not an academic department. You do feel that you're providing a service rather than a full member of an academic university
>
> - Kim

Thus, the physical location of her department − 'on the periphery' − and their administrative positioning in a service department rather than 'a full member of an academic university' appear to make her feel othered and suggest that she perceives her master status to align more naturally with that of an academic. However, as discussed above, the meanings participants appeared to attach to their positioning are fluid, and the two conceptualisations of EAP are not necessarily as clearly delineated as Ding and Bruce (2017) imply. The following example illustrates the potential overlap between the two models of academic field and profit-making service provider:

> We sit within Professional Services, and within that in Student Services, rather than in an academic school [...] Previously, before I joined the department, it was in Applied Linguistics within Arts and Humanities. The department for which I now work was seen as not academic enough, and not making enough money, and was therefore cast adrift by the academics within Applied Linguistics, which was perhaps in hindsight probably a foolish mistake given that now we make a pretty decent profit
>
> - Pete

Pete's use of phrases such as 'cast adrift', 'not academic enough' and 'not making enough money' suggests he feels othered by the *looking-glass self* (Cooley, 1902; 1998) view he

has constructed of his department and marginalised by their move to a service department. However, he also seems to feel vindicated by the fact that they now make a profit, which suggests he is not uncomfortable with the auxiliary trait of profit-making, nor does he appear to find this trait to be incompatible with a position within an academic department. Therefore, not all of the auxiliary traits of the support service model of EAP appear to be problematic for him. This may be related to a need for professionals to adapt to today's corporate world (Noordegraf, 2007) and reconstruct their identities within this world. It also suggests that EAP's income-generation function may be a means of constructing an identity that is less marginalised due to the power that this function may convey. Pete also appears to attach shifting meanings to his department's physical positioning and how this may be perceived by students:

> Before I joined the department, we were located on main campus, but because of the massive growth of the department over that two-year period, they ran out of space […] So, the head of department discovered there was an empty derelict building in the student accommodation village, so he took a fairly bold step in transferring the whole department there. Initially that worked very well because we had our space, we had our own facilities; we felt we were beginning to create a community of our own. Over time as more and more staff are engaged in delivery on main campus, and prefer it, and some students go down to main campus and discover 'oh, there's a whole university here', there is growing dissatisfaction with our location. Our students lose out because they don't have that sense of identity with the university. They see us as gatekeepers. They, to an extent, resent being with us, and all they want to do is get away from us and get onto main campus
>
> - Pete

The initial marginalisation he expresses at being 'cast adrift' by the academic department in which they had been located, and thereby being labelled as 'deviant' (Becker, 1963) in terms of not being 'academic enough', appears to have been somewhat mitigated by the creation of their own community. As Becker (1963) theorises, those who are labelled 'deviant' within a society are often then isolated from that society. This isolation causes the 'deviants' to develop a feeling of commonality or belonging with one another, which

then solidifies their identity as a 'deviant'. Thus, the relocation of Pete's department initially created this feeling of community. However, an unwanted side effect of this relocation, as he appears to perceive it, is that the students now see the EAP department as 'gatekeepers' and 'resent' being with them because they identify more with the wider university. The *looking-glass self* identity he appears to have constructed here involves a perception that others in the academy either want to cast them adrift (academic department) or get away from them (students), so there is a strong sense of a feeling of marginalisation. In addition to the marginalising function of his physical location, Pete implies that his department's isolation from the main campus may be seen to affect students' motivation and seems to reflect a deficit model of students who do not speak English as a first language (Murray, 2016; Wingate, 2015). The language of non-traditional students is often problematised and functions as a gatekeeping measure (Lillis, 2001; Burke, 2008), which then may impact on students' motivation as Pete seems to imply below:

> What else would improve my status? The physical move back to main campus because that would make my students happier, and happy students means happy staff
>
> - Pete

Expressions of marginalised feelings were not always attached to a positioning within a support/service department, as the following example suggests:

> We merged with the Modern Languages department, which they didn't like at all because they thought they were proper academics and we are just supporting people
>
> - Tina

Again, there seems to be a construction of a *looking-glass self* identity as 'just supporting people' in contrast to 'proper academics', but it is occurring within an academic department rather than − as other participants have suggested − as a corollary of a positioning within a service department. This suggests that the positioning of EAP within service or support departments may be a symptom rather than a cause of its perceived marginalisation.

Notions of marginalisation were sometimes attached to private providers rather than to a positioning as service/support within a public university. The following participant described how her department is located within a Corporate Services department, but she suggested that, because of the difficulty choosing an appropriate academic department in which to locate EAP, they are, in their non-academic position, better placed to work with departments across the university. Therefore, her positioning within a service department does not appear to engender feelings of marginalisation, but she did express a fear that if they were outsourced, her department would lose its embeddedness within the university:

> I do worry about the outsourcing that's happening − private providers. I've never worked for a private provider in the UK, so maybe some of it is anecdotal, but for me it's vital that our unit is embedded in the university, that we have all of these different connections, and I personally think that that's easier if we are a university department. I'm not very worried about status, but I think that for our students that's important, and for our teachers' knowledge and information, and all of that, it's important. So for us as a unit, that's my fight, that we stay embedded in the university
>
> - Emily

This comment echoes a tendency in the EAP literature to present privatisation as a threat to EAP (e.g. Bell, 2016; Fulcher, 2009; Hadley, 2015), which may have some bearing on her view. Although elsewhere in her comments she appears to construct a master status more in line with the support service model than the academic field model, here she

appears to link embeddedness with student and teacher knowledge, thereby suggesting she does, to a certain extent, identify with the model of EAP as an academic endeavour, or at least one that should occur within an academic context. However, her expressed fears of privatisation reflect a feeling of vulnerability, which was another theme that ran through the interviews. This fear of privatisation will be discussed further in the section on the effects of the commodification of EAP in Chapter 6, but the comments above reveal the shifting meanings practitioners may attach to the physical or administrative positioning of EAP, suggesting that feelings of marginalisation are often attached to notions of a lack of embeddedness and power or agency, rather than directly attached to administrative or physical positioning.

### *5.3.2 Resistance to the notion of EAP as marginalised*

Not all participants constructed EAP as a marginalised field. There were interviewees who seemed to align themselves with the 'outsider view' of EAP as a profit-making support activity (Ding and Bruce, 2017) and therefore appeared to distance themselves from the notion of EAP as marginalised. This alignment seemed to be related to a sense that EAP's income-generation capacity afforded them power and agency, a view that appearing to seek professional status was somehow distasteful, or a belief that their effective teacher identity afforded them 'separate but equal' status. Those who distanced themselves from the notion of EAP as marginalised appeared comfortable with an administrative positioning within a support or service department. For example, the following participant maintains that his unit's move to a service department has had no impact:

> We got quite upset at one point when we were moved from an academic department into Corporate Services, about 4 years ago, and everybody was upset,

> but it hasn't changed anything. We're one of the richest departments in the university, and I believe we get a lot of leeway to do whatever we want
>
> - Mike

He appears to associate his department's profit-making capacity with greater freedom rather than marginalisation, and therefore his *looking-glass self* construction of EAP seems to be that of a profession that wields some power due to its income-generation capability. He seems to actively resist the notion of EAP as marginalised, as suggested by his response to my question about whether the positioning of his department has an effect on their status:

> I've got a colleague who has bought into this notion that I hear a lot of in EAP circles that "we are not respected" and "the academy looks down on us" I think it's a really interesting idea, and quite often you'll see this on the BALEAP list – people talking about this idea that we're somehow kind of … [struggles for word − ST suggests 'Cinderella complex'] ...ok, yeah. But I wonder, I often say to my colleague, "someone needs to do some research on this because this is just like a mental way that people are getting themselves into. It's like 'oh, they don't respect us'. Well how do you know they don't respect you?"
>
> - Mike

Mike may have perceived my reference to status as a kind of 'face threat' (Goffman, 1967) which challenged his own identity construction, and thus put him in 'the wrong face' (Goffman, 1967), necessitating an explanation of why he resists the notion of marginalisation that he hears 'a lot of in EAP circles'. Thus, he does not appear to attach the same meanings to discourses in the EAP literature and in 'EAP circles' of EAP as a marginalised profession. He may instead feel that these discourses are a face threat to his conceptualisation of his own identity. Therefore, the notion of a marginalised profession that is often constructed in the EAP literature does not appear to constitute a joint action involving shared interpretations of EAP identity (Blumer, 1969).

The following participant does not appear to view his positioning in a service department as having a marginalising function but rather that his department is 'separate but equal':

> We're a service providing centre; we're not a school like other parts of the university. So there's a bit of a mix in terms of what we do and who we are […] in terms of our interaction with other schools; they know we teach, we have students, programmes etc., so for them we're just another school
>
> - Paul

Therefore, it was apparent that participants did not have a shared meaning regarding whether the administrative and physical positioning of EAP has a marginalising effect, or whether this marginalisation should be challenged, but appear to have constructed their identities in response to their own contexts and their own *looking-glass self* constructions of how they believe they are perceived within the academy.

### *5.3.3 Marginalising effects of setting: office space*

A final sub-theme that emerged within the theme of physical and administrative positioning was that of the office space allocated to EAP practitioners. Goffman's notion of 'setting' is helpful in shedding light on comments regarding how office space may be a signifier of the marginalised status of EAP practitioners. As discussed in Chapter 3, Goffman (1959) refers to the area where the performance takes place as the 'front region'. This front region holds the 'setting' – the stage props used in the performance. Offices may be seen as one 'front region' where EAP practitioners perform their jobs. The issue of office space is related to that of physical positioning but is not a topic I had considered discussing with participants. However, one interviewee raised the issue in an email she sent me after her interview:

> I thought of another practical aspect that perhaps sends the message that EAP tutors/lecturers (by any other name…) are (unintentionally?) made to feel lesser than 'academic' tutors/lecturers…it's a small thing but I think it can have a very psychological effect, it kind of does on me….and that is…offices. I think most academic lecturers get their own office whereas I have never had my own office as an EAP 'lecturer'. It has always been a shared small office (2 people in one office) or a shared room (with 4 others). In this job, I've experienced being pushed from pillar to post on quite a demotivating scale. I have shared an office with one other colleague (only senior tutors get their own office), been moved to another 'permanent' office shared with 3 other tutors (which turned out, again, to be temporary) and in the summers, we all decamp up onto main campus where 50 of us share a huge room, that's managers, coordinators and teachers altogether
>
> - Kim (by email)

This may seem a relatively minor issue in terms of the wider identity of EAP practitioners, but, as Kim suggests, it can have quite a demoralising effect. Furthermore, front often becomes institutionalized; it "becomes a 'collective representation' and a fact in its own right" (Goffman, 1959:37) reinforcing the marginalisation of EAP practitioners. Other participants also linked office space to lower status, both in terms of the shared nature of the space and aspects of the 'setting' such as furniture:

> The office, that is a matter of rank, isn't it? So, senior lecturers get an office for two, programme leaders might get their own individual office, I'm in an office where there are six people. I don't mind! (laughs) Our division moved to a different office a few years ago and the process of moving was quite traumatic because they were trying to save the space in very humiliating ways by not giving us a proper desk, so there was a half desk and a half storage unit, so that was quite hard
>
> - Tina

Tina's use of the word 'humiliating' to describe the effect of the limited equipment hints at the power relations involved in institutional settings and how these symbols of status can contribute to the construction of marginalised identities. There were also comments about the practical implications of shared workspaces, such as their effect on practitioners' ability to perform their jobs effectively:

> When I first joined the university, most of us had a single office. Then we moved into an office with two other people, now I work in an office with six other people, most of whom aren't there, but I think it's a flaming nuisance really because it's just like a staffroom, and we're teachers in a staffroom. Clearly that doesn't encourage private time where you could look up a few things and maybe engage in some research writing
>
> - Steve

He raises an important point about the need for a quiet private space in which to read and do research, which has implications for professional knowledge. EAP practitioners are seldom research active in the same way as other academics are in terms of being required to submit research to − and for that research also to be approved by − the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and this seems to have some bearing on their status in terms of contracts, organisational positioning and physical positioning within the academy. This calls into question issues of what types of research are valued in the academy, and why those who do not engage in 'valued' research may be marginalised in certain ways. In Steve's case, he appears to feel that the shared office space impacts on his ability to engage in the more 'academic' aspects of his job, suggesting he views his master status as that of an academic rather than a teacher. Another way in which shared offices may impact on EAP practitioners' ability to perform their jobs is related to the resources that they need:

> I don't really have a problem with the whole staff room notion actually as it can be very collaborative, but one thing that does bother me is that I am considered willingly peripatetic. What about all the books and resources we amass over our careers? Are we presumed not to do so? Have an office at home? I expect it's more the former, sadly. I experience this as a kind of inference of dispensability. Yes, there is a lack of space on most campuses nowadays but doesn't the fact that academic posts come with offices and the rest of us are expected to 'make do'/share/move around convey an opinion that we are less worthy, less important?
>
> - Kim (by email)

A number of words that Kim uses, including ‘inference of dispensability’, ‘less worthy’ and ‘less important’ suggest a clear perception that shared offices and the temporary nature of her office space provision have a marginalising function, in that there is a failure to provide for the aspects of setting that are necessary for her job. In addition to the othering function of shared space, the setting of those spaces and the stage props that form part of that setting may also be viewed as signifiers of status:

> There is something about every academic with their own place, and it’s full of books, and a bit messy, and papers lining everywhere, and there’s this cloak of learning persona − it’s highly symbolic. “I am embedded; I am here”. […] In my previous job […] we all had our computer spaces, and when I went away, my space was a hot desk. You’re not embedded; you’re more dispensable. And also, you don’t have that “look at my learning” aspects around you
>
> - Beth

As Beth so eloquently suggests, the props of an academic – the books and piles of papers − are highly symbolic (Vanderstraeten, 2007) and, like the white lab coats donned by Haas and Shaffir’s (1977) medical students, create a ‘cloak of competence’ for the professional and a valuable impression management tool. EAP practitioners who do not have access to these props are therefore limited in their ability to create this academic persona. These props also indicate the ‘embedded’ nature of the academic, which contrasts with the ‘dispensable’ EAP practitioner and the ‘peripatetic’ life Kim describes above. Thus, the inconvenience of shared office spaces and the accompanying difficulty in engaging in work that requires a quiet space − or room for the ‘props’ practitioners require to perform their jobs, and which are also signifiers of academic status − are perceived as not merely a result of institutional issues related to space management, but to have a fairly explicit marginalising or othering function.

## 5.4 Lack of recognition and the need to 'shout loudly'

Another thread that ran through much of the interview data was an apparent belief that the nature of EAP is not understood. Frequent references were made to others in the academy not understanding the role of EAP, but participants also indicated that 'shouting loudly' was often an effective means of gaining recognition.

### *5.4.1 Lack of understanding linked to lack of recognition*

There was a perception which emerged from the data that a lack of understanding of EAP contributed to its marginalisation or lack of recognition within the academy. The following comment exemplifies this:

> Perhaps, like many departments of our stripe, we are not as recognised as I feel we should be, simply because people just don't know. It's always that thing of academics don't really understand what we do […] Where we are is a bit unsure. People think 'oh, the Language Centre, they do French and Spanish'. There's not a full understanding of what it is we do, and what EAP is. And that's partially understandable because academics are doing things we don't [understand]… actually we have to understand it a little bit because we have to access it [laughs]
>
> - Beth

Cooley's (1902; 1998) *looking-glass self* may be helpful here in elucidating this identity construction. Beth appears to perceive that other members of the academy do not understand the work that EAP practitioners are engaged in, and that this may be a factor in EAP's liminal positioning: "Where we are is a bit unsure". She then seems to connect this perceived lack of understanding with an opinion she ascribes to the 'academics':

> I do think there is a sort of ontological aspect of … oh, EAP is something that happens outside the university by a private company … kind of: "Can we just pay them to fix all the foreigners before they come here and do their real learning"
>
> - Beth

There is no indication that Beth agrees with this imagined opinion, but her reference to 'paying them to fix the foreigners' and 'real learning' seem to suggest that she perceives this lack of understanding as having an othering function. In response to a question about the status of EAP in higher education, she says:

> I think the party line is that we don't get the respect we deserve […] I don't feel it day to day but that's because of course we're surrounded by other EAP teachers. I imagine I feel it less than others, just looking at the BALEAP listserv, and some people are upset about it. I think it's better here at Y University than at many institutions because it's so small. We don't g*et all* the world's brightest students, so many of the lecturers are down with the idea that students need EAP skills and possibly that they themselves don't have the skills to teach them […] I think in my little bubble I'm somewhat comfortable with EAP, but I think EAP needs to be more widely understood. And outside of the bubble of HE no one has any idea of what we do
>
> - Beth

Beth's *looking-glass self* seems to reject the imagined opinion of others, or to view it as a perception applied to other EAP practitioners rather than her own experience. Indeed, her reference to 'the party line' seems to suggest that she may distance herself from this notion of EAP not being respected, although she does say that EAP needs to be more widely understood. Thus, she seems to attach different meanings to her own experience and to her perception of how EAP is viewed as a whole profession. In the following example, the interviewee does seem to feel marginalised by the lack of understanding and resulting administrative positioning of her own department:

> You do feel that you're providing a service rather being than a full academic member of a university, which is ironic because we've got three people with PhDs in our department. Admittedly one of them isn't in education, but the other two are, and it's a bit of a kick in the teeth, I think, when you've got your PhD, or you are research active; you might not be publishing, but you might be writing blogs or attending or presenting at conferences, but you're not recognised outside of that within the university. I don't think they have a clue sometimes what we do. I think they see us as a subservient…we are a support role for their real stuff
>
> - Kim

Kim appears to perceive a lack of respect for, and understanding of, what her department does in their positioning as a service, which contrasts with the notion of being a 'full academic member'. She seems to view this positioning as particularly unfair in the light of the 'cloak of competence' (Haas and Shaffir, 1977) members of her department are wearing in the form of PhDs, a qualification which is often seen to represent an "insignia of office or rank" symbolising academic personal front (Goffman, 1959:34). Goffman's (1959) concept of dramatic realisation may also be helpful in elucidating Kim's perception. He argues that performers use signs to indicate facts that might not otherwise be apparent to the audience. For some statuses, this dramatisation is unproblematic because the nature of the task includes the performance of these signs. For example, the traditional lecturer role in academia tends to involve research and publication (Whitchurch, 2012), and this 'sign' affords lecturers a certain status in the academy. However, EAP roles tend not to have a research remit, and this is often used as a means of assigning practitioners different job titles and positioning them in non-academic departments. Kim highlights the unfairness of her department being seen as subservient despite the fact that members of her department engage in dramatic realisation of their status in the form of signs such as PhDs or presenting at conferences. She seems to question the lack of value attached to signs of research activity such as writing blogs or presenting at conferences, while the sign of published research is traditionally attached to the role of 'academic'. Thus, this notion that EAP is not understood seems to highlight an insecurity amongst practitioners about their perceived value within the academy, which may contribute to feelings of marginalisation.

### *5.4.2 'Shouting loudly': greater understanding linked to greater recognition*

The other side of this coin was the sense that greater understanding of EAP tended to lead to greater recognition within the academy. Unlike in Kim's case above, the following participant's department is able to exhibit research as a sign of their academic status, which she appears to believe affords them greater recognition:

> We're in a pretty privileged position here because one of the areas the university falls down in is not having enough publications, for example, and we've got a history of publication and presentations, and I've been at the cutting edge of EAP, and I think we're very privileged, and I know of other situations where there's no encouragement of that at all
>
> - Maureen

However, despite their publication record, a threat of privatisation appeared to highlight a lack of understanding of their contribution to the university, and invoked Maureen's department to make the 'signs' of their performance more overt in order to manage the impressions of senior management and thereby achieve greater recognition:

> I think one of the points when we became more recognised was when there was a bid by a private provider to take over the department, and there was a really concentrated, united effort by the institute to pull together and put forward a case rejecting this. High levels of management were very into the private provider coming in. I think that struggle partly made people in management aware of what was going on in the department and the sort of work that we were doing and the extent of it; I don't think that was ever recognised. We were thought of before as, not poor relations, but someone who provided a service for the students, and not a very important one
>
> - Maureen

This attempt to manage the impressions of senior managers at her university appears to have been successful, resulting in the positioning of the department within an academic school. It also appeared to result in the greater professionalisation of those within the

department through the awarding of job titles such as professor and assistant professor[2]. Their efforts to manage impressions and create a shared meaning regarding the value of EAP within higher education may have also been in response to a *looking-glass self* (Cooley, 1902; 1998) view that had developed in which they perceived themselves to be viewed as "a service for the students, and not a very important one", as Maureen suggests. Another apparent example of a constructed *looking-glass self* relates to EAP as a whole rather than Maureen's own individual identity:

> Still a lot of people, if you say you're an EAP lecturer, they have no idea what that means. I suppose that's a reflection of it being very much the poor relation
>
> - Maureen

Like Beth, she appears to have constructed her own personal identity − and the collective identity of her department − as different from her perception of the collective identity of EAP practitioners (Johnston *et al*, 1994). She seems to make a clear link between increased understanding of EAP and her own department's improved status within her context, but she also appears to have constructed a view that EAP as a whole has not experienced this increased recognition:

> In the last few years it's definitely improved, our status here, and more departments around the university know what we're all about, so I'd say it doesn't mirror what's out in the broader world
>
> - Maureen

There were other examples of marginalised *looking-glass self* identities that appeared to have been reconstructed in response to a perception of increased understanding within participants' own contexts:

[2] This was not mentioned during the interview but was conveyed during a conversation on another occasion.

> I think we described ourselves once in semi-jest as being 'pond life' […] but I think that what has happened over time is, perhaps because it's a relatively small department, they have come to see that we have talents and therefore we are seen much more as equal if different
>
> - Pete

As suggested by Maureen's comment above, this recognition may also be seen to be a direct result of EAP practitioners' efforts to manage impressions:

> I think it depends on the institution and I think it also perhaps depends on who shouts loudest […] If we think of someone like Olwyn Alexander [former chair of BALEAP], I think she's very very good at what she does, and I think that's a combination of the fact that she's willing to stand up on a soapbox and shout very very loudly, and also because everyone takes her very seriously
>
> - Pete

This notion of managing impressions by 'shouting loudly' is further reflected in the following comment:

> I think some people really don't know what we do because it's so different from what they do. Last year I organised a conference and I needed to invite a person of authority to open it, so I spoke to our Pro-vice Chancellor of Student Experience. We had a meeting to discuss what he was going to talk about and he said: "what is this EAP? You don't call it EFL anymore?" [laughs]. I kind of lectured him without getting too annoyed because he's very senior, but I had to put him in his place a bit and explain that EFL was an entirely different thing, not that one has replaced the other in terms of an acronym as he was suggesting. He was suggesting that it's just language. I think he took on board what I was saying, that we don't do much EFL, and EAP is quite different […] His opening talk was certainly respectful of the people there. One thing he did was he looked at the programme and the number of doctors there and the universities that were represented that have a higher status, and I think he took it more seriously. I think that is reflective of how some people might think. But again, I do feel very fortunate that I have good contact with a lot of people around the university and I can contact them freely and they don't dismiss me. I participate in a lot of university-wide things. I'm an academic conduct officer, so I investigate cases of plagiarism. I belong to a forum where we discuss plagiarism issues. Then I sit on academic misconduct committee panels, and in that way, I'm participating in university-wide strategies
>
> - Jane

Jane appears to be engaging in an idealised performance (Goffman, 1959) in which her aim is to achieve recognition for EAP and her own achievements in response to her perception that EAP is not understood. Performances may be idealised in a number of ways and tend to present the values of the society in which they occur. Jane has 'shouted loudly' for EAP by integrating herself into the university, making cross-disciplinary connections, and involving herself in activities related to academic functions in the university. As discussed in the first section of this chapter, she appears to position her identity as that of an academic, and the quote above indicates the impression management strategies she uses to ensure that others perceive her identity in the same way. Her reference to 'the number of doctors' presenting at the conference she had organised is an example of the 'sign-equipment' that actors use to develop an idealised performance (Goffman, 1959). In this case, unlike Kim's perception, as discussed above, she appears to believe that this 'sign' – a number of PhD holders – appealed to the values of the pro-vice chancellor, as a representative of the university as a society.

Through her impression management activities within the university, and her donning of the 'cloak of competence' of a PhD, Jane seems to feel that she has improved the recognition of EAP at her university and increased her own professional standing. Hence, participants seemed to connect increased recognition with their efforts at 'shouting loudly', but Pete also suggests that this is specific to EAP – other academics do not have to 'shout loudly' in order to be recognised:

> But I think perhaps we're always on the back foot, we're always having to prove ourselves rather than being taken as seriously as some of the academic and credit-bearing courses
>
> - Pete

Therefore, this perceived lack of understanding of what EAP is – both within the academy and in the wider world – and this strong theme of a need to manage impressions suggests a field that is insecure in its position, and, as the final comment suggests, always having to prove itself.

## 5.5 Maintaining the boundaries of EAP: distancing EAP from EFL

Another theme that emerged in relation to, or perhaps in response to, the perceived lack of understanding of the field of EAP, was an attempt to maintain boundaries around EAP by distancing the practice from its more generic cousin, EFL. Distinguishing EAP from EFL has preoccupied much of the EAP literature (e.g. Alexander, 2007, 2012; Alexander *et al*, 2008; Bell, 2016; Bruce, 2011; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Hyland, 2006), perhaps as a way of carving out a clear identity for EAP or to make a claim for the professional status of EAP, but this boundary maintenance may also be perceived as creating hierarchies.

### *5.5.1 Carving out an EAP identity through boundary maintenance*

The apparent desire to distance EAP from EFL was a thread that ran through many of the discussions. Goffman's (1968) notion of stigmatised identities may be helpful here in order to illuminate why distancing EAP from EFL is a preoccupation of the EAP literature and a theme that emerged during my interviews. Goffman (1968) argued that those who perceive themselves to be stigmatised may position their identities in relation to those they perceive to be more markedly stigmatised. By aligning themselves with 'normals' − and distancing themselves from those whose stigma is more apparent − those individuals feel less stigmatised (Goffman, 1968). In the case of EAP, practitioners may see other academics as 'normals' and EFL teachers as having a more stigmatised identity. Thus, by

distancing themselves from EFL, EAP practitioners may be attempting to construct an identity that is closer to that of academics. This also relates back to how participants positioned themselves in terms of their professional identities, and whether their master status appeared to be more aligned to that of an academic or to that of a support service. This comment exemplifies this distancing from EFL:

> I would say the very name English for Academic Purposes, we have that link with academia that EFL doesn't have and doesn't want to have; it's not appropriate because we're preparing students, training them for different things. I think that's the defining factor, so I don't think we can be seen in the same way or seen together
>
> - Maureen

This comment echoes much of the literature in arguing that the specific *academic* nature of EAP makes it different from EFL. Maureen appears to have constructed a master status as an academic, but she also relates this identity to the pedagogical aspect of her job − the preparing of students for academia − which suggests a hybrid status as an effective teacher as well as an academic. By rejecting EFL as 'not appropriate' for this job, she aligns herself with the more 'normal' academic identity.

There also seemed to be a perception that others positioned EAP as EFL in a reductive sense, and participants wanted to distance themselves from that reductive meaning, as can be seen in the following examples:

> I think senior management here are very much keen to push that we're a language teaching unit, and for me I think we do a lot more than that […] I'd like to see EAP divorce itself more from that, personally […] They have staunchly held beliefs that we're language teachers and nothing more
>
> - Rebecca

> In my PhD, I've argued that EAP is a field that is worthy of respect. It's not just an outside operation or something secondary to other studies. It is a field in its own

> right, a professional field. It makes me very angry when I hear lecturers belittle what an EAP department does by saying "oh you're just teaching English"
>
> - Jane

The use of the words 'just' and 'nothing more' suggest not so much that these participants do *not* view themselves as language teachers, but that they view their identities as something *more*, as 'specialists', a 'professional field' or 'lecturers', and that being positioned with language teachers stigmatises them by reducing their professional status. Thus, distinguishing EAP from EFL seems to be an impression management tool that aims to distance practitioners from the perceived 'stigmatised' or reductive identity of EFL and thereby make others aware of the complexity of their role. This boundary maintenance may also be an attempt to construct a collective EAP identity (Johnston *et al*, 1994) as suggested in the following comment:

> I think EAP needs its own identity. EAP needs to be its own thing and be happy to step into its own sphere separate from ELT, be its own academic department, be its own academic entity […] I think we look too much to ELT rather than thinking about creating our own research, creating our own little world. It's different
>
> - Rebecca

### *5.5.2 Boundary maintenance as hierarchical*

However, not all participants distanced themselves from EFL, which may suggest alignment with a stigmatised 'in-group'. According to Goffman (1968), stigmatised individuals may form in-group alignments, and exaggerate their stigmatised identities, in order to reinforce their belonging to the 'real' group to which they naturally belong, in this case English language teachers. This is similar to Becker's (1963) argument that those labelled 'deviants' develop a feeling of commonality or belonging by joining groups of a similar identity. The following comment seems to suggest such an alignment with a stigmatised in-group:

> Well really, we're only teachers. We're not in the same league as a university lecturer. We're not there to impart bodies of knowledge. We're language teachers really. And language teaching is acquiring a skill not imparting lots of knowledge in any way. I think EAP tries to raise itself to that kind of level, and I think that's a bit of nonsense
>
> - Graham

By distancing himself from the 'normals' − that is, the academics − Graham appears to construct his own identity as that of a language teacher, thereby creating a different collective 'we' from the practitioners quoted above. Goffman's (1968) theory that those who align themselves with the stigmatised in-group tend to view alignments with 'normals' as foolish may shed light on Graham's reference to attempts to align EAP with other academic activities as 'a bit of nonsense'. These differing constructions of EAP's relationship with EFL suggest identities that are fragmented rather than collective. There was also a sense, in some comments, that attempting to distance EAP from EFL contributed to this fragmented identity by creating hierarchies:

> When [name of EAP practitioner] came to present to us, first the classic line about how the academy doesn't respect us, and then the whole thrust of the talk was about the difference between novice EAP and established EAP. She said that she thought it takes 5 years to become an established EAP teacher, and she had this list of the differences between them. What I thought was quite interesting about that, and it was maybe just my impression, was that…You know EAP people can be very sniffy about TEFL, which I think is crazy, and she was saying the academy should respect us more, and these other people who are not quite……you know, so it seemed like you're pushing yourself away from that to push yourself closer to that. We're like this, and you know the others are not quite like us. It was building this kind of hierarchy within EAP
>
> - Mike

Thus, as Mike appears to perceive it, boundary maintenance can have the function of marginalising other groups and creating hierarchies within the field. This reflects the "deficiency model of 'novice' EAP teachers" (Ding and Campion, 2016:555) referred to

in Chapter 2. Rather than creating a collective EAP identity, it may function to alienate or marginalise practitioners *within* the field. The following interviewee also suggests that boundary maintenance leads to hierarchical positioning:

> If you say "I'm an EAP lecturer" or tutor or whatever you want to call yourself, they have no idea what you do, and as soon as you start explaining, they'll just assume you're an EFL teacher, and the majority of us, I think, would probably go, "Oh no, we're not EFL tutors, we're EAP practitioners" or whatever; there's definitely a hierarchy there, I think […] It's interesting that if you do attach importance to your status, you're going to have to explain it, much more than someone else across the university
>
> - Paul

This relates back to the above theme of a lack of understanding about EAP. This lack of understanding means EAP practitioners are often positioned as EFL teachers, but Paul highlights the difficulty of carving out an identity for EAP without seeming to create hierarchies.

Thus, no clear shared meaning emerged amongst participants in terms of whether they position EAP as an academic activity or as EFL. Those who distanced themselves from EFL may have been attempting to align themselves with the academic 'normals' in the university in order to create a distinct identity for EAP in response to feelings of marginalisation or lack of understanding. Those that aligned themselves with EFL may be reluctant to engage in hierarchical positioning, and thereby fragment the field, or to be seen as status conscious.

## 5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an analysis and discussion of four of the seven main themes emerging from the data gathered from interviews with 17 EAP practitioners. It first

examined the meanings participants attached to notions of professional identity, how they positioned themselves in line with those meanings, and how they identified themselves. It then examined how participants attached different meanings to the administrative and physical positioning of EAP departments in terms of the potential for this positioning to have a marginalising function. The third theme discussed was a perceived lack of understanding of EAP and the need for practitioners to 'shout loudly' in order to be recognised within the academy. The final section of Chapter 5 examined how practitioners attempted to maintain boundaries around EAP by distancing it from EFL, but how this boundary maintenance was also perceived to create hierarchies within the field. Chapter 6 will discuss the final three themes that emerged from the data: the notions of labels and stigmatised EAP identities, effects of the commodification of EAP on practitioners' identities, and how scholarship may inform EAP identities.

# CHAPTER 6: STIGMA, COMMODIFICATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the analysis and discussion of the data gathered from the interviews. It examines the remaining three themes that emerged from the analysis of the data: how EAP practitioners talk about themselves and how this may be related to stigmatised identities within the field, the effects of the commodification of EAP on practitioner identity, and how scholarship may inform EAP identities.

## 6.2 How we talk about ourselves: labelling and stigmatised identity

A major theme that emerged from the data was that the labels which we EAP practitioners use to talk about ourselves may reveal stigmatised identities. As discussed in Chapter 2, certain labels or terms used by EAP practitioners and others in higher education to describe EAP are problematised in the literature. These terms include the word 'support', often used to distinguish EAP from 'content' and to distinguish EAP practitioners from 'content lecturers' (Gavriel, 1999) or 'subject specialists' (Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001), and the word 'service' – often a synonym for support − which, as discussed in the section on marginalisation and positioning, may be used to exclude EAP from traditional academic activities. A further aspect of this labelling that has been problematised in the literature is the job titles – usually 'tutor' or 'teacher' − used for EAP practitioners, which contrast with the traditional academic title 'lecturer', and which may be a means of allocating different, less favourable, working contracts to EAP practitioners. The labels discussed in the literature were sometimes seen as stigmatising or marginalising, but there was also a considerable amount of derogatory language used by the interviewees to refer to EAP that appeared to suggest a view of themselves as stigmatised. Becker's (1963)

labelling theory, Cooley's (1902; 1998) notion of the *looking-glass self*, and Goffman's notion of stigma (1968) will be used to examine and shed light on responses by practitioners that relate to this theme.

### *6.2.1 Stigmatising labels: support, tutors and teachers*

Labels such 'support', 'service', 'tutor' or 'teacher' do not hold inherent meaning; EAP practitioners construct meaning through their interaction with others and their interpretation of how others use these labels (Blumer, 1969). Therefore, it is useful to attempt to understand their interpretations in order to gain an understanding of the identity they have constructed for themselves. The participants appeared to attach different meanings to the labels, resulting in different identity constructions. There was a sense from a number of responses that the labels attached to EAP, either by ourselves or by others, have a stigmatising function. The word 'support' connotes positively with notions of facilitating student learning, but it may also be used to 'other' EAP and to create a false dichotomy between content knowledge and language knowledge (Scott and Turner, 2008). This tension between the two interpretations of the word 'support' was reflected in the participants' responses to questions about the use of the term. Almost all of the interviewees used the word at least once when describing their role, and responses varied when they were asked their views about the way the word 'support' is often problematised in the literature. Some participants appeared to agree with those in the literature who argue that the term 'support' subordinates EAP to content knowledge. In the following example, the interviewee appears to suggest that positioning EAP as a 'service' or 'support' makes it 'subservient' and less than a 'full member' of the academy:

> You do feel that you're providing a service rather than a full member of an academic university […] I don't think they have a clue sometimes what we do. I think they see us as a subservient. We are a support role for their *real* stuff
>
> - Kim

This relates to comments in the section on positioning in Chapter 5, in which some participants connected the use of the word 'support' with administrative positioning in departments such as Corporate Services or Professional Services rather than in academic departments. For some practitioners, the terms 'service' and 'support' seem to have a marginalising or stigmatising function, particularly in terms of indicating that EAP is not an academic activity, as suggested by Kim's reference to not being a 'full member of an academic university' and to being support for 'their *real* stuff'. This also appears to be reflected in the following comment:

> Initially it was the Language Centre – academic English for international students − then we merged with the Modern Languages department, which they didn't like at all because they thought they were proper academics and we are just supporting people
>
> - Tina

Here the word 'supporting' seems to have been constructed as a 'deviant' label in the sense that 'supporting people' are perceived as inferior to the 'proper academics'. Both Becker's (1963) notion of deviance and Goffman's (1968) stigma are socially constructed in the sense that stigma or deviance are not undesirable in themselves – they are undesirable in relation to a socially constructed view of how individuals should be. In other words, both Kim and Tina seem to view this label as stigmatising or othering in relation to the 'normal' (Goffman, 1968) identity of an academic, and this seems to reveal feelings of vulnerability in their position. However, the tension between the positive and negative connotations of support meant that interviewees might have a more nuanced view on the extent to which the term is stigmatising:

> A word I don't like used with regard to EAP is 'support' because… Joan Turner wrote about metaphors used, and she imagined support with walking sticks and Zimmer frames and things like that, and I agree with that. A couple of years ago, I saw an advert for a prestigious university wanting a senior lecturer in law, *so it's a serious job*. It said: 'in this job, you will support undergraduate and postgraduate students', and I thought, "that's alright if a senior lecturer at a prestigious university can use the word 'support' about their teaching at master's and PhD level, then we shouldn't worry about it"
>
> - Dave

Although Dave seems to be suggesting that perhaps the term 'support' should not be stigmatised, I detected a note of sarcasm in his words "if a senior lecturer…can use the word 'support'…then we shouldn't worry about that" and his reference to 'a serious job' in juxtaposition to EAP, which suggests that he does not necessarily subscribe to that view. This is borne out by his agreement with Turner's metaphorical conceptualisation of Zimmer frames and walking sticks. Therefore, there was a definite sense that he felt the label was stigmatising when used in conjunction with EAP.

The job titles 'teacher' or 'tutor' also appear to have been perceived by some to have an 'othering' or stigmatising function. Some appeared to feel that job titles were an important signifier of status and worth within the academy. For example, Jane, a senior lecturer at her institution, explains that this title is very important to her in terms of status:

> I'm very proud to have that job title because I know not all professionals in my field have that […] I care very much what I'm called. I think that's because I'm not new to the profession, and I'm not at a stage when I feel those things don't matter − they *do matter* – and they can be taken away so easily by some private provider coming in and saying "now you're going to be an instructor" […] It concerns me when I see EAP staff who are called things like Language Fellow, Language Tutor or Instructor. I do feel that unfortunately there are lot of EAP departments where staff don't have the posts, recognition and stability as well − I think stability is a major issue – that they deserve
>
> - Jane (Senior Lecturer)

Goffman (1968) argues that the stigmatised person may feel 'normal' but may perceive that others "do not really 'accept' him [or her] and are not ready to make contact with him [or her] on 'equal grounds'" (1968:18). Jane appears to feel on 'equal grounds' with other academics at her university, but that a non-academic job title would render her less acceptable to others. The job title 'senior lecturer' is an insignia of her rank and therefore forms part of the personal front (Goffman, 1959) she presents to her audience in order to maintain the identity she has constructed for herself. Her reference to "some private provider coming in and saying: 'now you're going to be an instructor'" suggests that she feels her position within the academy is vulnerable, so she uses impression management techniques, such as engaging in PhD research related to EAP, in order to validate the identity she ascribes to herself. She also makes the point that job titles may also have practical implications in the form of job instability linked to the contracts that often accompany these titles.

The symbolic nature of job titles as insignias of rank, and therefore a means to subordinate EAP practitioners, was also highlighted by the following interviewee:

> Titles often exist for other people, as a sort of symbol, something on the CV, and we are therefore disadvantaged by having these different titles and lesser-seeming titles. To most, 'lecturer' or 'professor', or whatever our academic colleagues get, seems far more important than 'tutor' or 'teacher', and that's an issue. So we are disadvantaged by these titles […] These titles *do* make a difference, if we want to be treated as equal in this field, if people don't recognise what we do, etc., and even just for our own sense of what we do – so many of us are getting PhDs and getting so highly specialised – there should be some signifier for that, so the titles are important […] It's not just important for me and my colleagues but for the field and people coming into it, this should be recognised
>
> - Beth (EAP lecturer)

Despite having the job title 'lecturer', Beth still expresses concerns about the use of other titles for EAP practitioners. It seems her identity is not just constructed around her current

status and position in her own work, but also situated within the field of EAP as a whole. She appears, thus, to be engaging in sensemaking, a process in which members of a group develop shared meanings (Patriotta and Spedale, 2009). Identities are constructed through social interaction, during which the sensemaker is constantly redefining his/herself (Weick, 1995). Our own perceived identity has an effect on how outsiders perceive us and behave towards us, which then "stabilizes or destabilizes our identity" (Weick *et al*, 2005:22). Thus, the symbolic nature of job titles appears important to Beth because "[w]ho we are lies in the hands of others" (Weick *et al*, 2005:22). In other words, Beth's own identity as a lecturer is reliant on a shared meaning, within the field of EAP as well as the academy as a whole, of EAP practitioners as lecturers (academics) rather than the less prestigious job titles of 'tutor' or 'teacher', which undermine the specialist nature of what we do.

### *6.2.2 Stigmatising words we use to describe ourselves*

Another suggestion that participants constructed their identities as stigmatised was the derogatory terms they sometimes used to refer to the field or EAP practitioners. These did not appear to be the participants' own representations of the field, but rather a *looking-glass self* identity they had constructed from how they felt they were perceived by others in the academy. The following are examples of this kind of looking glass self identity:

> we described ourselves once in semi-jest as being 'pond life' – Pete
> currently [EAP] is in the gutter with all the support providers – Ildiko
> we're supposedly in this commercial bubble – Sue
> we felt like the Cinderellas of the department – Sue
> the poor relation − Maureen

What these terms seem to have in common is a sense that EAP practitioners have a stigmatised outsider identity. The interviewees quoted here appear to view EAP

practitioners as marginalised because they are perceived to be inferior in some way. This suggests that practitioners may construct their own identities as effective teachers who consider themselves to be professionals in order to assert their own self-worth in the face of perceived stigmatisation.

Another word used to describe EAP practitioners that seems to contrast with how practitioners see themselves was 'gatekeepers':

> [The students] see us as gatekeepers – Pete
>
> I do feel that some of the departments we certainly deal with have that kind of gatekeeper approach of, you know "On the IFP[3] you should only be sending us those who're really good. Make sure anyone who's not going to get a first doesn't come across"
>
> - Paul

These participants appear to attach a stigmatised meaning to the notion of gatekeeping. This role may conflict with their identity as effective teachers engaged in supporting students and might be seen to contradict the "the moral purposefulness" (Nixon *et al*, 2001:234) associated with being a professional. As in earlier examples, the notion of EAP practitioners as gatekeepers seems to be a *looking-glass self* perception of how EAP is viewed by outsiders; however, this sort of stigmatising language was not always used to indicate a perceived outsider view. In the following examples, the participants appear to accept that EAP should be positioned differently:

> a lot of us are glorified EFL teachers – Paul
>
> The teacher comes right at the bottom of the ladder, the lowest of the low of those who teach at university […] we're still at the bottom of the heap
>
> - Graham

[3] International Foundation Programme

As will be discussed in the next part, participants sometimes resisted the notion that EAP should have greater status, and the above comments seem to suggest a view that this is just 'the way of things'. This may be face-work (Goffman, 1967) in response to the face threat implicit in my questions about the status of EAP practitioners. For example, Graham's response to any perceived stigmatisation appears to be to accept the 'deviant' label and construct his identity around that label so as to avoid being seen as status-seeking. The following comment suggests that these stigmatised identities are self-constructed, and that more successful impression management − the 'shouting loudly' discussed earlier − might mitigate them somehow:

> Is it self-fulfilling prophecy that because sometimes we *think* we're the poor cousins, we *become* the poor cousins? […] I think it's very easy to feel the poor cousin, and I think to a certain extent that's how we are made to feel by academics. But if we continue to believe that there is a deficit model, and that we are the poor cousin, and if we don't take stock of ourselves and our positions and say: "Actually, hell no! We are pedagogically really really strong, so, you know what, we're not going to buy into this. We're going to put ourselves forward as being every bit as good as you are, just differently"
>
> - Pete

Again, the effective teacher identity seems to be used to assert Pete's self-worth in response to a perception that EAP is viewed as the 'poor cousin' and something that should be 'shouted loudly' in order to counter the perceived stigmatised identity.

### *6.2.3 Resistance to the notion of a stigmatised identity*

Although, as described above, some participants appeared to view their identities as stigmatised, others seemed anxious to distance themselves from a notion of EAP as stigmatised or marginalised. The following comment is an example of this:

> I've got a colleague who has bought into this notion, that I hear a lot of in EAP circles, that "we are not respected" and "the academy looks down on us"[…] If you go to Physics and say "what do you think of Law?", they'll say "Law is a waste of time", and if you go to Law, they'll say that the Marketing people, "that's not a proper academic subject". I don't think there's a cohesive core, the academy; I don't believe that exists. I mean it's basically a bunch of individuals and they probably all think their particular subject is very important and not given enough respect
>
> - Mike

As discussed in Chapter 5, Mike appears to reject any collective identity (Johnston *et al*, 1994) of EAP as marginalised, but instead seems to position EAP within a disparate academic community composed of fragmented identities, of which EAP is merely one, and not one that is stigmatised in relation to the others. He also distances himself from the idea that the job titles assigned to EAP practitioners have a stigmatising function:

> I'm not embarrassed to be a tutor, I don't think I'm a lecturer, whatever that means. It's just a name. I'm only impressed with what someone has done or what they're saying than what their title is
>
> - Mike

The fact that he uses the word 'embarrassed' suggests that he has constructed a *looking-glass self* view that other EAP practitioners may feel embarrassed by the title, and he is managing impressions so as to distance himself from this perception, perhaps to avoid it becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy, as Pete suggests above. In a similar vein, the participant below does not seem to feel that being viewed as support confers any inferior status to EAP:

> I *do* see it as support […] they need help to be able to succeed in their studies and they need different types of help or information or knowledge or skills. And some of that information, knowledge and skills is provided by their content lecturers, and some is provided by us. My view is we are different, but that doesn't make it hierarchical, so it doesn't mean that what they get from their content tutor is better or more important because for some of them it's not
>
> - Emily

By setting boundaries between the support offered by EAP practitioners and the knowledge provided by 'content lecturers', and thereby making a 'we-they distinction', Emily may be aiming to create a stronger collective identity for EAP (Johnston *et al*, 1994:20) and rejecting the positioning of EAP as stigmatised.

As suggested in Chapter 5, EAP practitioners sometimes distance themselves from EFL in order to maintain boundaries around their EAP identity and perhaps position themselves as less stigmatised than EFL teachers. This boundary maintenance is somewhat complex because, although practitioners sometimes distanced themselves from EFL, there was also a sense that this background was linked to their identity as effective teachers. The following comment suggests that the participant wishes to distance himself from an identity that considers titles to be important, but he also sets a boundary between EFL teachers and EAP practitioners, perhaps indicating that in some ways status is important to him:

> People take their titles or positions a bit too seriously. I'm not saying this is 100% of people, but a lot of us are glorified EFL teachers. Not all of us (!) but a lot of us have come from that background, and we're in positions which are much much better than working in a language school, and for me I'm happy about that every day
>
> - Paul

Although he suggests that titles are unimportant to him, he appears to construct EFL teachers as stigmatised and EAP practitioners as being in a higher status position with better working conditions. Therefore, by maintaining boundaries around his EAP identity, he is able to distance himself from any stigmatised identity. These boundary-maintaining discourses, including the self-identification of EAP practitioners as effective teachers,

provide "security for individuals by making the world meaningful and populated by others who have similar understandings and ways of sharing ideas" (Hyland, 2012:11).

## 6.3 Effects of the commodification of EAP on practitioner identity

As discussed in Chapter 2, EAP is profoundly affected by the commercialisation of higher education. The globalisation and marketisation of higher education has led to increased EAP provision but has also had a negative effect on the working conditions of EAP practitioners (Ding and Bruce, 2017; Hadley, 2015). As such a defining feature of EAP, it is not surprising that income generation was a fairly strong theme emerging from the data, but there appeared to be two main responses to this facet of EAP. Some participants appeared to connect their department's income generation function with increased status and power within their institutions, while others seemed to feel alienated or threatened by this function. This section examines how the meanings practitioners attach to the commodification of EAP may affect how they construct their identities.

### *6.3.1 Alienating effects of a neoliberal model of EAP*

One theme that emerged was that the marketisation of higher education seemed to have an alienating function for interviewees, as in the following example:

> Another aspect is I feel very alienated by everything that relates to the managerial side of university life, this whole thing of management creating these strategies and emailing these documents about their visions and strategies and policies. This to me feels very alien and a bit Soviet. And the language that they use is so different from the way we talk about our work and the way we experience it. So, it's like it's a different universe. So, I don't feel I belong in that at all. People do have different feelings and attitudes to that world, but everybody who has some career prospects or has some position which is important in any way [laughs], they have to get involved, at least at some level, with that. So sometimes they get involved trying to fight against it a little bit through trade unions, or sometimes they suffer in silence, and sometimes they suffer loudly, so it's different relationships.

> But I just hide away and once in two years in the appraisal process, they sort of pull me out of this pond and I say something frightened and that's it [laughs]
>
> - Tina

Tina's comments echo Hadley's (2015) argument that academics are now "managed knowledge producers" whose "research and pedagogic output must be justified as beneficial to the university through quantitative measures" (Hadley, 2015:6) and Beck and Young's (2005) reference to the alienation professionals are feeling in the light of this audit culture. The alienation she describes, and the words she uses to describe her experiences and those of others − such as '*suffer* in silence', 'the *language* they use is *so different'*, they (those who have career prospects) '*have to* get involved' – suggest that she is experiencing 'senselosing' from the threat to her identity from this culture (Patriotta and Spedale, 2009). Sensemaking involves the co-construction of meaning (ibid), which appears to be profoundly lacking in her experience. The language they speak is so alien to her that she cannot construct any shared meaning with those involved, and people who have 'career prospects' are forced to communicate in this alien language. It seems that the master status some EAP practitioners may have constructed of effective teachers is in conflict with the imposed master status of profit-making entity. The following comment suggests some parallels with Tina's experience. This participant had a high-level academic position as a principal lecturer but was made redundant. He describes the circumstances around his redundancy:

> They said it wasn't about money but I'm sure it was […] They didn't have a lot of academic staff [...] They decided the whole thing wasn't necessary, so they closed the whole faculty [the interdisciplinary department that he was part of]. They put everything out in the faculties […] So colleagues of mine who were working in those areas, mostly hourly paid, are still doing that work within those faculties. They are frustrated, lonely; they want a centre; they miss the old days. They say it wasn't done to save money, but I think it was
>
> - Dave

Dave appears to link his redundancy to a desire on the part of 'them' to save money. The language he uses to describe the experiences of his colleagues who are still employed there – 'frustrated', 'lonely, 'they miss the old days' – echoes the sense of alienation expressed by Tina, and by describing how his 'hourly paid' colleagues were kept on, while he lost his high-level permanent position, he appears to link this sense of alienation to money-saving strategies within a marketized higher education system. In addition to this sense of alienation, a sense of vulnerability was also apparent in some participants' responses. The following participant describes how being employed on temporary contracts affects her:

> I don't like it because I'm not used to it […] I've never been in a position where I had different jobs every month. You have to adapt to new groups of people and new ways of working every few months. It is quite exciting, but at the same time it is nerve-wracking […] If I got a full-time position in EAP it would be better because I'd be able to develop my skills, I'd be able to improve, advance, really study and really focus on something
>
> - Maria

Maria focuses on how the fact that she is only able to obtain temporary contracts makes it difficult to develop as a professional rather than on the financial issues related to job insecurity. Thus, her identity as a professional seems to be connected to her ability to develop − a common theme among participants' conceptualisations of professionals − and this suggests that her temporary contracts make it difficult to fulfil the service ethic associated with professional identity. There is an enormous range of contract types, roles and working conditions for EAP practitioners in the UK, which is reflected in the range of interviewees' comments surrounding the effects of marketised higher education on their own working experiences. The following comment suggests this:

> My main feeling about it all is quite how varied the EAP profession is in the UK. I haven't seen a job title or salary scale that would be as low as the one we're on. And it seems quite ridiculous how varied it can actually be across the country, and also how it can be falling between lecturer and support staff role and how with the new language centre, and how our director is on a Grade 10 and earning lots of money, seems to be undermining us even more from our low position, and that's really what I wanted to say – how angry or sad it makes me when all I see is a dedicated team working very hard to support international students, and yet we are almost seen as some sort of troublemakers, and hoping this situation won't get worse, which is how it seems to be going
>
> - Sue

Sue's comment exemplifies Hyland's description of "universities run by a professional administrative class earning CEO-level salaries and with a focus on rankings, a view of students as customers, and a growing reliance on topdown administration and bean counting" (Hyland, 2018:388). There is a conflict between the director, who 'is earning lots of money' and the 'dedicated team working hard' who are undermined and seen as troublemakers. Thus, Sue's perceptions of how they are treated appear to have a profound effect on her identity and seem to be in conflict with her apparent master status as a dedicated and hard-working practitioner.

The fear of being outsourced to private providers of EAP was a related theme that emerged in a number of interviews. Three main fears were expressed regarding private providers: the practical implications of perceived inferior working conditions, the potential undermining of practitioners' academic or professional status through the removal of EAP units from the university, and the potential impact on their ability to educate students effectively because of marketisation strategies designed to bring in the maximum number of students with less regard for the educational function of EAP courses and professional development of practitioners. The first fear is exemplified in the following comment:

> Because of the degrading of contracts; they [a private provider that attempted a takeover of her department] told us we'd have to work 9-5 and clock in and out. They told us we'd have to do far more contact teaching hours
>
> - Jane

The second fear, that private providers threaten practitioners' professional or academic status, is expressed in the following comments:

> I have a fear that those kinds of private providers have a negative effect on the standing of EAP tutors. There's something about it being outsourced to a private provider that seems to give the impression that it's not an academic job
>
> - Sue

> They [a private provider that attempted a takeover] told us […] that we wouldn't be members of the university anymore, we'd work for them. And so it seemed to question all of our professional standing
>
> - Jane

This seems to suggest that they view their master status as that of an academic, or at least as a member of the academy, and that privatisation may threaten this master status by imposing different contracts and separating them from the university context which gives them their academic identity. The third fear − that private providers would undermine the educational function of EAP − appeared to be related to their identity as effective teachers. As Fulcher (2009) has described, private providers often lower the entry requirements in order to recruit greater numbers of students. This appeared to be something that participants feared would affect their ability to provide quality teaching, as exemplified below:

> We […] were told we were going to be taken over by this provider within the next month or two, and they came in and told us things like, "you'll have to teach students with IELTS 2 and turn them into undergraduates in a year and a half". The vice chancellor was very keen to have them, but we fought back and engaged in a big battle because the feeling in my department is that private providers are not the way we want to operate
>
> - Jane (who works for a public university)

Her use of 'this is not the way we want to operate' suggests a professional identity at odds with the 'sausage maker' (Hadley, 2015) model of EAP that the private provider seemed to be advocating. However, this sort of consequence was not just attributed to privatisation, as the following comment suggests:

> One of the things that's happened here is there's been a half band drop; they can get in with a half band lower than they could before [she's referring to the IELTS score]. The students actually need a higher level to be able to cope with certain courses. And it's purely driven by money because students were going elsewhere because of the high standards that were demanded here
>
> - Maureen (who works for a public university)

Maureen highlights the increasing competition faced by universities to attract international students, and the potential negative effects of this competition in the form of lower entry requirements, which puts pressure both on students − who face a greater challenge reaching the level of English required to study effectively − and practitioners − who bear the burden of helping the students achieve against very difficult odds. Participants also expressed a fear, which echoes claims in the literature (e.g. Bell, 2016; Hadley, 2015), that teachers working for private providers face heavy workloads, and that the focus on profit rather than quality provision means that little support or funding are available for scholarship or professional development:

> If [privatisation] is, as it seems to be, lower wages, less job security, less room for research and furthering our practice; if it is more like a kind of cheap and cheerful language school with no flexibility and no way for teachers to bring their experience to bear; if it's "follow the book" and "research leave – what are you talking about?", that's probably a bad thing for our industry
>
> - Beth

Thus, private providers appear to be viewed as a threat both to those who perceive their master status to be that of academics and those who view themselves as effective teachers, in that these institutions may be seen to pursue profits ahead of attempting to support practitioners in their professional development.

Although there seemed to be a common perception that private providers are a threat to EAP, as a number of participants pointed out, public universities often engage in the same practices that private providers are accused of:

> The biggest or the roguest university in this country that employs people on temporary contracts is [a Russell Group university], so if this is an argument [that private providers offer inferior contracts], it's a non-starter; it's a no brainer because universities keep people on hourly and temporary contracts, especially in language centres […] They may have three full-time permanent staff, and then another 15 are brought in as the need arises, and I'm not sure that they hire the highest qualified people. They also have a budget. Yes, the private providers *may* have the problem, but the universities have an equal problem of the same nature
>
> - Ildiko (who works for private provider)

As Ildiko points out, private providers are not the only institutions in which education is commodified and EAP appears to suffer. Perhaps as a consequence of this, some participants made less fearful comments about them, and the two participants who did work for private providers did not appear to view them as a threat to the professional status of EAP practitioners in the same way. The following comment indicates the experience of a participant who was working for a private provider:

> Within a year, I've been made permanent. Compared to the university where I did my MA − their teachers are on zero-hours contracts for years and years. They have much less job security than I do. They have permanent staff as well, but they have 4 or 5 people who've been on zero-hours contracts for a long time
>
> - Ingrid (who works for a private provider)

Although fears are often expressed about inferior contracts offered by private providers, her own experience does not bear this out. A similar sentiment is expressed by the following participant:

> I've often found myself defending [a well-known private provider] because of my previous experience working there. I only worked for them for about 3 months because I was offered the full-time position here, so that made more sense for me at the time, but I was actually happier working there; I felt I was treated better; I felt things were more organised. As I mentioned before, my job title was lecturer and I felt more respected as a professional there
>
> - Sue (who works for a public university)

Working for a private provider does not appear to have threatened her master status as an academic, whereas in other comments she indicated that her current employer does. Thus, practitioners did not appear to attach the same meanings to the perceived threat – as constructed in the EAP literature − that private providers may pose to the profession. Fears expressed about them, in the light of similar profit-focused practices on behalf of public universities, might be a form of face-work in the sense that those expressing these fears are attempting to maintain boundaries around their master statuses as academics or as effective teachers, and that blaming private providers for the negative effects of neoliberal models of EAP might be the easiest way to construct and express these boundaries.

### *6.3.2 Income generation as a means of empowerment*

Another recurring theme was how EAP's ability to generate income might be related to its status and recognition within the academy. There were some comments suggesting that income generation afforded EAP departments some power within their institutions. For example, in addition to her perception that her department was valued due to its

activities in supporting students and its publication record, this interviewee also appears to feel that income generation also gives them power:

> We've brought in huge numbers of students and it's all about income
>
> - Maureen

EAP may also be valued because it generates income that can be used to fund other activities within the university (Ding and Bruce, 2017), as reflected in the following comment:

> I think [other language tutors] actually suffer more than we do. I think the academics look down on the language assistants, and they don't want to give them a promotion because they'll lose money from the research budget. For us as EAP, that's different because in a sense we are a cash cow for the school
>
> - Steve

In the earlier discussion on how participants positioned themselves within the academy, there appeared to be a tension between those who constructed their master status as academics and those who constructed their master status as that of teacher or support service. Some suggested that positioning EAP as support had a marginalising effect and undermined practitioners' academic identity. In relation to this, there was a sense among some participants that this marginalising function was somewhat mitigated by their ability to generate income, which afforded them some power:

> The department for which I now work was seen as not academic enough, and not making enough money, and was therefore cast adrift by the academics within Applied Linguistics, which was perhaps in hindsight probably a foolish mistake given that now we make a pretty decent profit
>
> - Pete

This makes it difficult for EAP practitioners to construct an identity that fits with how they view their master status and may result in some degree of cognitive dissonance. The following participant, who appeared to construct his identity as that of an effective teacher in earlier discussions, hints at this conflict but also suggests that it is not just income that affords them power:

> Because in a sense we are a cash cow for the school, and because we're seen as increasingly doing a half decent job, and because there are a lot of us, I think we have a kind of position within the university
>
> - Steve

The notion that they are 'doing a half decent job' coincides with his identity as an effective teacher, and this seems to mitigate their 'cash cow' status within the university. However, there was still sometimes a sense of vulnerability, even amongst those whose departments have some power. The following participant, who described his department as making 'a pretty decent profit' expresses some doubts about their security:

> We are *told* (who knows from one day to the next if this is going to be the case) that we are highly valued and there is no intention of us being sold off to a private provider, but who knows. We are *told* that we are highly valued, and in certain cases we certainly are, and there is good linkage between our department and certain key university committees. So, we were on this series of fixed-term contracts; the outgoing head of department was very keen that that should be remedied. There are precedents in Wales for other staff to be going on permanent contracts, and we will too
>
> - Pete

Despite being reassured about his department's value and being offered permanent contracts, Pete's emphasis on the word 'told' and repetition of 'who knows', suggests that he does not fully trust this reassurance. Thus, participants appear to link their job security and status within the academy to the ability of their departments to make money, but this

may then be related to feelings of marginalisation and may conflict with their identities as effective teachers or viewed as a temporary – and therefore insecure – state.

## 6.4 How scholarship informs EAP identity

The final key theme that emerged in relation to the construction of EAP identities was that of the connection between research or scholarship and EAP identity. I use the terms 'research', 'scholarship' and 'scholarly activity' as defined in Chapter 2. When interviewees provided their own conceptualisations of professionals, as discussed in the first section of this chapter, a major feature was continuous learning or development, which, I would argue, is impossible to achieve without scholarly activity. Earlier sections have examined how participants appeared to have constructed identities around whether they considered themselves to be academics, a support service, or effective teachers. This notion of scholarship seems to be strongly connected to how participants identified themselves within those positionings and how they may view their master statuses. However, there was also considerable variety in the nature of responses, suggesting the lack of a coherent view or experience of scholarship amongst practitioners. Although engagement in scholarship appeared to be an important part of practitioners' identities, the nature of these identities and their connection with scholarship were messy and difficult to pin down. The four main sub-themes that emerged regarding scholarship and EAP identity are discussed in the following sections.

### *6.4.1 Research and academic identity*

A key sub-theme which emerged was that research was a significant feature distinguishing EAP from other academic activities in the sense that not being 'research

active' or being on 'teaching-only' contracts was used to assign EAP to support service departments rather than academic departments and was a reason for the job titles 'teacher' or 'tutor' rather than the academic title 'lecturer'. Some participants appeared to view the notion of research defining the role of academic or lecturer as unproblematic, as in this example:

> The problem is there is no suitable term because we don't lecture, and a lecturing job requires you to do research as part of your contract, so that is one little issue there that I have with EAP lecturer
>
> - Ildiko

However, most responses were much more nuanced, which is in line with the fragmented identities that have emerged so far. Some participants appeared to make a distinction between traditional research – as I have defined it – and scholarship or scholarly activity. This distinction may be a factor in the reluctance on the part of some practitioners to identify as academics, while viewing scholarship as a part of their 'effective teacher' identity. However, these positionings as academics or non-academics were confused and sometimes contradictory. For example, the following comment seems to suggest that traditional research is necessary for an academic identity:

> I can't realistically [call myself an academic] in the post I'm in because it would just feel fraudulent – I'm not involved in research other than things you do in your own time, but we're constantly reminded we're not a research department
>
> - Rebecca

This notion of being 'fraudulent' seems to be a *looking-glass self* identity constructed on the basis of how others in the academy may view her because she is not engaged in traditional research. She does appear to be engaged in scholarly activity because of her phrase, 'other than things you do in your own time', which seems to suggest a belief she

needs to have provision in her contract for research time in order to consider herself an academic. However, when probed about the relationship between being a researcher and being an academic, she appeared to revise her position:

> I think there's a perception of that [that to be an academic you need to be a researcher]. I'm not sure how far I agree with that. At my university, for example, they've recently changed promotion routes so there's two options, a teaching route and a research route. I think that's very telling. I don't think the two parts are mutually exclusive; they're both important in being an academic for me […] Lecturing is teaching. I don't see a lecturer role as a researcher; that's something else they do that either informs their teaching or furthers their academic career or whatever, but we're all doing the same thing. Even as EAP practitioners, it's informed by research, so we should have the same label
>
> - Rebecca

This seems to be the kind of identity construction that Scott and Lyman (1968) describe in which an *account* or *justification* is provided for a particular behaviour − in this case not wishing to refer to herself as an academic because she feels 'fraudulent'. However, as Scott and Lyman (1968) point out, once an account is made, the speaker is committed to the identity attached to this account. If the speaker then wishes to redefine that identity, she may then need to make another account to explain this, as Rebecca seems to be doing here. This identity switching may be dangerous, as the listener may then doubt the speaker's claim to identity. The speaker's response to this may then be to rationalise the identity (Scott and Lyman, 1968), as Rebecca seems to do here in linking effective teacher identity with academic identity when she refers to EAP teaching as being informed by research. Although in her earlier comment she is reluctant to call herself 'an academic', she argues that EAP practitioners should have the same 'lecturer' job title because she sees scholarship as an external activity that informs practice or as an academic activity in itself, not a defining feature of the lecturer role. Although her comments seem contradictory, my interpretation of what she says is that she conceptualises 'an academic'

as a role that exclusively, or mostly, involves research, while lecturers are teachers who also engage in research, and these lecturers (and EAP practitioners) have academic identities because of the nature of the work they do. However, her comments seem to highlight the confused nature of EAP identity. The following participant is much clearer about her own identity and has a slightly different interpretation of why EAP might be marginalised within the academy:

> We are not *other*. We research, and we teach what we do based on research, and we try to make it as good as possible for the students, much the way other lecturers would say that they do as well. It's just that in our case, our focus, the thing that we study is *how* to study and *how* to teach; it's just a bit too self-reflexive for people to easily grasp
>
> - Beth

Beth's statement, 'we are not other' clearly positions her identity with academics, but she also hints at an 'effective teacher' identity in phrases such as 'we teach […] based on research' and 'we try to make it as good as possible for the students', indicating a focus on classroom practice. Her interpretation of why EAP research is viewed differently – that it is more *meta* in the sense that it focuses on the *how* rather than the *what* − is interesting because it is sometimes a factor that is used to argue that EAP is *not* an academic activity. For example, the following participant appears reluctant to position EAP, or himself, as having an academic identity:

> We don't impart lots of knowledge; we're not digging into any profound truths […] EAP is very target orientated […] We are teaching skills, and these skills are related to HE. These are necessary to be able to study successfully; that's the point of it […] but I don't think it puts us on a par with somebody who does research into psychology or physics. We're just not on that level at all…so I think we're still at the bottom of the heap
>
> - Graham

He does not appear to view the areas of research and practice that EAP is engaged in as 'knowledge' or 'profound truths' in the same way as knowledge within psychology or physics might be. His use of the phrase 'bottom of the heap' does, however, suggest a stigmatised identity, and he appears to have aligned himself with this stigmatised 'in group' in constructing his own identity.

In relation to the contrasting views above, a clear sense that emerged from the data in general, and on the topic of scholarship in particular, was the enormous variation in roles, expectations, contracts and positions of EAP practitioners in the UK. The following comment makes reference to the vastly differing expectations of, and provision for, scholarship in EAP in different institutions:

> I think it very much depends on the university. I've been amazed at the difference […] I worked at a university in Wales and I felt it was quite similar treatment to here, where you're seen as a teacher who could just be called on to go and teach a support class from one day to the next, and there's no consideration of any academic side to your job at all. Whereas I've worked at a university where everyone's on a lecturer position, you're very much considered part of the department, and everyone's encouraged to do research, and it feels very much like that's expected or that's where you're positioned as an EAP professional
>
> - Sue

There appears to be a juxtaposition here between the somewhat disjointed support identity in which 'you're seen as a teacher who could just be called on to go and teach a support class' and the academic identity, which involves being 'part of the department' and 'everyone's encouraged' and 'you're positioned as an EAP professional'. The academic identity Sue experienced, therefore, seems one in which she felt a greater sense of belonging. The support identity appears to be marginalised or stigmatised, while the academic identity seems far more in line with the master status she has constructed for herself. The variety of approaches to scholarship in different institutions was reflected in

the different experiences of my participants in terms of whether they were given space in their contracts for research and encouraged to engage in scholarship through funding or support from managers. The lack of a coherent role or place for EAP across different institutions may contribute to the fragmented nature of EAP professional identity.

### *6.4.2 Importance of scholarship for practice and professional identity*

The kinds of research or scholarship in which participants were engaged reflected a tendency – sometimes critiqued in the literature (e.g. Benesch, 2001; Pennycook, 1997) − to position EAP as practical or pragmatic in nature. There was a sense from the interviews, and this is reflected in the EAP literature, that EAP practitioners are frequently more often engaged in scholarship (or scholarly activity) that informs classroom practice than research in the traditional sense, or as I have defined it. This was reflected in the following comments:

> The research we do is applied. Most of the research I've done has had practical objectives, trying to deal with problems that I've had
>
> - Dave

> I see a clear role for pure EAP academics, so I'm quite happy with the concept of someone who is researching EAP and is perhaps not classroom active, though I think probably research is somewhat informed if you have some classroom time
>
> - Pete

Pete's comment, in particular, suggests that practice is important for research as well as the reverse, which again hints at the effective teacher construction running through the interview data. This effective teacher identity also seemed to be reflected in comments about more traditional routes to an academic career, such as through PhD study. Even though participants appeared to view an increase in the number of EAP practitioners engaging in doctoral study as a valuable development within the profession, many

expressed reservations about its value to EAP practitioners. There seemed to be a feeling amongst some practitioners that EAP is pragmatic and classroom-focused, and that practitioners are teachers rather than academics. They appeared to perceive doctoral work to be more theoretical, and therefore of questionable benefit to EAP practitioners in terms of their professional development. This apparent perception is reflected in the following comments:

> Yes, I can't see anyone saying no, there isn't a place for it, but I can't personally see what doing a PhD would actually change to my day-to-day job and approach overall. Yes, of course I might learn more about, let's say assessment, […] but then that's not necessarily going to affect my teaching of essay topics or something
>
> - Paul

> I don't [think it's important for EAP practitioners to get a PhD]. It *could* help you become a better EAP teacher because of having the PhD experience, having been through the journey yourself. I don't think it makes you any better or worse a teacher
>
> - Kim

For these participants, the effective teacher identity seems to be more dominant than an academic identity. Related to these doubts about the value of doctoral study for classroom practitioners, there also seemed to be concerns about what doctoral qualifications would mean in terms of career progression, and where a PhD holder would fit into the average EAP department, as the following comments reflect:

> If I did a PhD, would I feel pushed into becoming a TESOL lecturer? Perhaps there's a kind of feeling, if I stayed here after doing a PhD, people might think I stayed here because I wasn't very good
>
> - Mike

> Only if they've got somewhere to go! […] If EAP isn't in an academic department, where do those academics, doctors, where do they go? Are they a lone wolf in an academic department, so to speak? Are they doctors in corporate services?
>
> - Rebecca

This reflects back to the earlier section on the widespread administrative positioning of EAP in support departments rather than academic ones and highlights how this may not only have a marginalising function but may also make it difficult for EAP practitioners who want a more academic role to find a place for themselves in the academy. Mike's comment that if he stayed in EAP after obtaining a PhD, people might think he 'wasn't very good' is quite telling of the framing that exists around EAP academic identity – that academic career paths are not the norm in EAP, and that a PhD holder would move to a position in a field that is perceived to be more academic, such as Applied Linguistics. In response to Rebecca's question, 'where do they go?', I suggested that in an ideal world I would like to see EAP occupying an academic department like any other with a range of positions from very academic to more teaching-orientated roles. She responded as follows:

> I completely agree with you and I guess one of my dreams with the new job is…there's no EAP hub in the UK, there's nowhere where you think: "god, if wanted to study EAP, I'd want to go there". Ideally, I'd love to establish somewhere like that because there needs to be something like that; there's so much expertise in the field, so much brilliance, it's just where it goes
>
> - Rebecca

She highlights the lack of a natural home for EAP. The wide variety of roles, administrative positionings, contract types and research expectations for EAP in the UK mean that constructing any kind of collective professional identity is very difficult and results in a fragmented profession. This fragmented identity seems especially prevalent in the area of scholarship, as the confused and sometimes contradictory responses made by my interviewees regarding scholarship and academic identities seem to suggest. As mentioned earlier, although some questioned the value of PhD study, a number of participants appeared to value the research being done in the field, and expressed the view

that experience in this level of study was also beneficial for classroom practice in the sense that practitioners can draw on their own experience when helping students, as can be seen in the following example:

> Even if you think it's divorced from what we do, why would you argue against having more…no, let's lower standards! [...] Even the argument about making it pragmatic is flawed because you're going to be teaching students who are going to be doing the same thing, the same process. I think the knowledge of that…I think we all accept that someone who has learned another language is a better English teacher. Why would you not want that transfer of skills?
>
> - Beth

Although participants expressed a variety of views with regard to more traditional research activities, scholarship or scholarly activity seemed to comprise an important part of their identities as EAP professionals. Most interviewees mentioned engaging in scholarly activity of some kind, be it reading, attending or presenting at conferences, conducting studies in the classroom to inform their teaching, or publishing their research. There seemed to be a genuine desire to contribute to scholarship and a sense that it was an important aspect of being an EAP practitioner, as exemplified in this comment:

> My identity as a researcher… since I've written it, I've been needing to turn my dissertation into an article for publication in the Journal of English for Specific Purposes. My supervisor, who is one of the co-editors, said I should submit it. It should by rights be in JEAP[4]. Because it's only me driving that, there's no deadline; it hasn't happened. So a bit of my identity as a researcher, it's not a huge thing obviously, or I would have done something about it…My identity as a researcher is not something I'm hugely tied to, but I think part of being a good EAP teacher is you are a researcher, so I want to make sure that doesn't fall by the wayside
>
> - Beth

As in comments made earlier, there is a strong sense here that the researcher, or academic identity, is very much tied to the effective teacher identity.

[4] Journal of English for Academic Purposes

### *6.4.3 Barriers to EAP scholarship*

Despite this sense that many participants were engaged in scholarship or scholarly activity, interviewees also pointed out that there are a number of barriers to engagement in research activity for EAP practitioners, and these relate mostly to the commodification of higher education and of EAP in particular. As discussed in Chapter 2, and the earlier section on the effects of the commodification of EAP on practitioner identity, EAP is increasingly positioned as having an income-generation function that often supersedes its educational function, resulting in heavy teaching loads and limited opportunities for research activity and professional development. Some participants mentioned how scholarship was encouraged but practitioners were not given time to engage in it:

> Tutors in languages are presenting at conferences, as do members of our department, and we are increasingly encouraged to do so […], but there is a tension between the desire to have staff participate in conferences and then giving them the time and opportunity to do it properly – "we want you to do it but in your own time"
>
> - Pete

> You can do a PhD or research, but you wouldn't get any time off teaching, which does mean that generally we don't actually do a huge amount of research. We do try to present at BALEAP, and I recently presented at InForm[5], but actually publishing is not something we do, which is a bit of pity because we've got the experience and knowledge, and the guinea pigs to try things on with our students
>
> - Paul

Although many participants indicated that there was funding available for them to attend conferences, this was often only available for presenters:

[5] A journal for international foundation programme professionals published by the University of Reading. They also hold conferences

> If you present, but not to go and learn. At some stage I felt I was ready to go to a workshop, but I was told very clearly that if this was a presentation, a conference paper, it would be paid for but not otherwise
>
> - Tina

There also appeared to be a perception among some participants of a reluctance among other practitioners to engage in scholarship:

> I've given presentations at BALEAP for years, and my boss does, but very few people do this. My boss and I are the only two people who have any publications at all. I try to publish every year, but there are plenty of other people there who don't like it. They don't like the fact that we're active in publication. I think they have that attitude because they can't be arsed
>
> - Steve

> I think we're [in his place of work] quite anti-intellectual in the sense of …the two guys who've been here the longest don't go to conferences very much, don't publish papers, have never had an interest in that kind of thing, I don't think. They always say: 'I'm more about the teaching, teaching is important', which is fine. I think you can do both; I don't think it's one or the other
>
> - Mike

Some seemed to connect this perceived disinclination to the lack of expectation on the part of institutions that practitioners would conduct research, and there seemed to be a perception among some participants that more support and encouragement might result in more scholarly activity:

> I think that if you said to people: 'here is the carrot', people would respond, and you might get groups of people supporting each other through that. The little bit of research and publication I've done is very well supported by one of my line managers
>
> - Steve

The kind of practitioners who participated in my study no doubt influenced the responses I received. Participants volunteered to be involved in response to an email I sent to the BALEAP discussion list. Their engagement in BALEAP, and their interest in being

involved in my research, suggest that they might be the type of practitioners who are more inclined to engage with the profession outside of their contracted duties, which is a potential reason why the majority of them engaged in scholarship in one form or another, or expressed a desire to do so. Their identities as academics or effective teachers, therefore, seem bound up in their engagement in professional development. Reference to colleagues who were less engaged may suggest a wider disinclination in the field, which could be explained by a lack of encouragement from managers, lack of time to pursue these activities, or lack of funding to attend conferences or engage in further study.

### *6.4.4 Types of knowledge that are valued*

A number of authors in the EAP literature have argued that EAP practitioners need to engage more in traditional forms of research. For example, Ding and Bruce (2017) maintain that EAP practitioners need to publish more in order to professionalise and to increase their cultural capital within the academy. Similarly, Ian Bruce contends that EAP practitioners should

> see themselves less as a learning support agency, but as absolutely at the core of the academy, doing research, reading the theory and footing it with the rest of them to be honest, and I think that will give the subject the academic credibility that it needs in order to be fully accepted
>
> (Bruce, quoted in Bell, 2016:217)

These arguments are compelling, but, as discussed above, there are numerous barriers to engaging in any kind of scholarly activity or scholarship, much less the publication of research. Their comments also raise questions about the types of knowledge that are valued within the academy, and whether these should be challenged. The following participant makes reference to this issue:

> It's a bit of a kick in the teeth, I think, when you've got your PhD, or you are research active; you might not be publishing, but you might be writing blogs or attending or presenting at conferences, but you're not recognised outside of that within the university
>
> - Kim

This also relates back to the discussion on office space, and how shared offices suggest a perception that practitioners do not engage in research activities. As implied in discussions above, there seemed to be a view of two types of EAP researcher: professional researchers – usually applied linguists or lecturers in TESOL – who do 'theoretical' research, which is then published and disseminated to practitioners, and EAP practitioner researchers, who do small, practical classroom-based research, the results of which are shared at conferences and in less formal arenas such as websites or blogs. The traditional model of research as something done 'on high' by researchers that would then feed down to practitioners was challenged by the following interviewee:

> There's no reason why teachers shouldn't go out and do research, even if it's action research. Don't let this knowledge come from on high and shower down on you
>
> - Mike

Kim, in particular, seemed to be a strong advocate for practitioner-based research that works *together with* more theoretical research:

> I also think that there's this kind of hierarchical…more like rungs if you like, of theory and practice, and that practice has to be underpinned by theory, and that there's feed *down*, that people who do research pass that research on to the practitioners. I'm a bit more…I like the other way as well. I went to a talk about how this should be a symbiotic relationship, where people in the practice are feeding *up* their experiences, as well as people doing theoretical research feeding down, more a kind of exchange
>
> - Kim

Kim and Mike appear to be using subversive negotiations of face (Moore, 2017) to challenge the traditional view of research. Moore (2017) draws on Goffman's (1967) face theory − which focuses on how social interactions maintain harmony − and Butler's (1990) performativity theory − which situates these social interactions within wider power relations − to theorise that subversive negotiations of face "*denaturalize taken-for-granted identity categories*" (2017:263 original emphasis). By questioning the power relations extant in traditional models of research within academia, Kim and Mike appear to be attempting to challenge the researcher identity that is taken for granted in the academy, and to carve out a new scholarship-based research category which is more appropriate for EAP and would allow for a clearer academic identity for EAP practitioners. Currently, EAP's marginalised status and fragmented identity make it difficult to exert this kind of influence; however, Moore (2017) maintains that this form of subversion involves small reworkings of identity rather than revolutionary acts. Furthermore, the enormous changes in how higher education operates, including a greater focus on teaching in response to increases in student fees and the accompanying drive to increase student satisfaction and thereby recruit more students, may open a path for more practitioner-based, less traditional forms of research, which could be a means through which EAP practitioners can assert a different form of academic identity rather than following traditional routes in an attempt to further professionalise the field.

## 6.5 Chapter summary

Chapter 6 has continued the analysis and discussion begun in Chapter 5 by examining the three remaining key themes that emerged from the data gathered from interviews with 17 EAP practitioners. It explored how the language we EAP practitioners use to talk about ourselves may reflect stigmatised identities. It then looked at how the commodification

of EAP seemed to elicit feelings of alienation or vulnerability amongst some participants, while others viewed EAP's income-generation capacity as a source of power within their institutions. The final theme in Chapter 6 was how scholarship informs EAP identity. This section discussed how the absence of provision for research in many EAP practitioner contracts may be a means of marginalising the field. It also explored the importance of scholarship to EAP practitioners, the barriers to engaging in this scholarship, and potential challenges to the types of knowledge that are valued within the academy. The next and final chapter will conclude by summarising the findings of this study and reflecting on its implications.

# CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

## 7.1 Introduction

This final chapter summarises the findings of this study, which has sought to gain an understanding of the meanings EAP practitioners attach to notions of professionalism and issues perceived to be facing the profession as discussed in the EAP literature. This research has used key theories within the framework of Symbolic Interactionism to analyse how participants in the study described their identities, and thereby reveal ways in which these identities have been constructed, in order to understand how practitioners reflect on − and position themselves with regard to − the issues perceived to be facing the profession. In the first section, I refer back to the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis in order to summarise the key findings of the study. The second section describes the contribution I believe this study makes to the field. The next section discusses implications for professional practice. This is followed by a discussion of avenues for future research that could develop understanding in this area. The penultimate section suggests future action that might be taken in response to the findings of this study, and the chapter ends with a reflection on the impact of this study on my own development as well as its potential limitations.

## 7.2 Fragmented identities in a liminal space

The findings of this study reveal fragmented identities caught in a liminal space in the academy. However, there were also signs of shared meaning regarding some aspects of EAP identity, suggesting some constructions of a "collective 'we'" (Johnston *et al,* 1994) within the profession. In order to address the question of how EAP practitioners view

their own professional identity, I asked three main research questions. The key findings of this study are summarised below in line with these three research questions.

### *7.2.1 Constructions of professional identity*

The first research question asked what meanings practitioners attach to notions of professional identity and how they construct their identities in response to these interpretations. There was a strong sense that participants shared a conceptualisation of professionals as holding specialised knowledge and engaging in continuous professional development, and that they constructed their own identities in line with this conceptualisation. In terms of professional knowledge, they seemed to attach similar meanings to issues around the lack of an EAP-specific entry qualification and the enormously varied opportunities for continuing professional development among institutions in the UK. However, despite this apparent shared meaning with regard to the nature of the professions, participants did not appear to have a shared identity with regard to the two main spaces that EAP may inhabit in higher education: academic field or support service. Participants' responses suggested a positioning within one camp or the other in terms of the master status they appeared to assign to themselves, but there was some overlap in terms of their alignment with auxiliary traits that might be associated with one space or the other, such as scholarship or having an income-generation function. These two main positionings appeared to affect how practitioners constructed their identities with regard to issues discussed in the interviews, which will be elucidated further in the next section.

There were two areas in which participants appeared to have constructed shared meanings regarding their professional identity. One was the construction of a core identity, or

master status, that I have described as the ‘effective teacher’ identity, and which seemed to be shared by both the academic field and support service camps. This identity appeared to be constructed either in the context of − or to distance themselves from − notions that EAP might be marginalised, as will be discussed in the next section. This effective teacher identity appeared to be a source of pride and a somewhat stable identity within a fragmented profession. Some participants identified themselves directly as teachers, and throughout the interviews there were references that appeared to reveal this effective teacher identity. For example, participants sometimes constructed their identities around successful classroom practice, pedagogical knowledge or informed practice.

The second core identity that seemed to be shared was that of a practitioner engaged in scholarship and scholarly activity, which reflects the meaning they attach to professionals as holding specialised knowledge and engaging in continuous professional development. This identity was expressed through reference to activities that participants participated in, such as published research or presenting at conferences, or less formal avenues such as blog writing. It was also manifested in references made to the importance of scholarship and scholarly activity in informing teaching practice, thus linking this core identity to that of the effective teacher.

However, this identity was also somewhat slippery in terms of the nature of scholarship that practitioners appeared to view as identifying them. For example, some participants described being involved in traditional forms of research, such as completing PhDs or publishing for the REF, while others were engaged in writing blogs or attending conferences. Some participants appeared to regard traditional research activities like PhD study as important for the profession − suggesting an alignment with the academic field

model − while others questioned the value of PhD research for teaching practice, which suggests that their effective teacher identities were stronger than their academic identities. Therefore, unlike more traditional disciplines, EAP seems to lack a 'strongly bounded identity' (Beck and Young, 2005:185) in terms of the kind of scholarship practitioners engage with and around which they construct their identities. Nevertheless, participants' references to participating in a broad range of scholarly activities organised by various professional organisations suggest a strong EAP community of practice providing numerous resources for EAP practitioners.

The core identities of academics, support service workers and effective teachers that emerged seemed to have key meanings in participants' responses to, and positionings within, the issues EAP is perceived to be facing (as constructed in the literature or presented in my interview questions). These are summarised in the next section.

### *7.2.2 Identities constructed in response to issues in EAP*

The second research question asked how the meanings practitioners attach to issues discussed in the EAP literature influence how they construct their identities. The key finding here is that, although writers in the EAP literature tend to attach similar meanings to issues facing the profession (as discussed in Chapter 2), the participants in this study often attached different meanings to these perceived issues, and these meanings had implications for the identities they constructed. A number of key themes emerged within participants' articulations of their own identities which may be helpful in shedding light on meanings the practitioners attach to issues perceived to be facing the profession. The master statuses − of academic, support service or effective teacher – that participants

appeared to construct, are useful here in illuminating their positioning within these themes.

One dominant theme was that of EAP as a marginalised profession. Participants appeared to attach two main meanings to the administrative and physical positioning of EAP units. The first, which parallels arguments made in the literature, was that positioning EAP outside of the main academic activities had an othering or marginalising function. Those participants who attached this meaning to positioning within service departments rather than academic departments appeared to construct a *looking-glass self* identity in which they perceived themselves to be subordinate to, and in the service of, the academic departments. Therefore, those who constructed their identities as academics may feel marginalised if their positioning within the academy does not recognise this identity. Similarly, those who constructed a looking-glass view that their effective teacher identity was undermined or not recognised due to this positioning, might feel marginalised by this lack of recognition. There were also suggestions that physical positioning on the periphery of campuses might result in feelings of dislocation or be connected to a gatekeeping function, which also seemed to be in conflict with the effective teacher identity. A further aspect of positioning was a perception that shared office space was a 'front' (Goffman, 1959) that positioned practitioners as marginalised in comparison to academics, whose offices were symbols of a 'cloak of competence' (Haas and Shaffir, 1977) and embeddedness within the academy, while those of EAP practitioners were symbols of their dispensability and suggested that they had no need to engage in scholarly pursuits.

However, other interviewees attached different meanings to the notion of EAP as marginalised. Some appeared to resist this positioning, perhaps perceiving it as a face threat (Goffman, 1967) that undermined their identity as effective teachers. Those who viewed themselves as support service workers may also resist the notion of marginalisation – perceiving their role as separate but equal – particularly those who had engaged in successful impression management techniques (Goffman, 1959), such as demonstrating their teaching competence or creating good relationships with others in the academy, and those whose departments had some power due to their ability to generate funding for the university. Therefore, practitioners' own contexts often seemed to affect the meanings they attached to the positioning of EAP.

Another persistent theme throughout the data was the positioning of EAP practitioners as misunderstood. Frequent comments were made suggesting that a lack of understanding of the nature of EAP within the academy contributed to its marginalised or stigmatised status. However, participants also described being engaged in impression management activities in order to counter this lack of understanding. These activities included scholarship, involvement in university-wide projects, or, in a few cases, earning PhDs that would confer a 'cloak of competence' and offer a more traditional symbol of academic status. Another common impression management technique was 'shouting loudly', as one interviewee put it − in other words, communicating with others in the university and ensuring that the EAP presence is felt and understood. This need to engage in impression management strategies in order to make EAP more visible seemed to constitute a shared meaning or joint action in EAP, and some of those who resisted the notion of EAP as marginalised connected their embeddedness to successful impression management strategies.

Related to the themes of marginalisation and a misunderstood profession was the theme of stigmatised identities. Again, participants appeared to attach different meanings to the terms used within the field. Some expressed the view, which is also frequently presented in EAP literature, that job titles such as 'teacher' or 'tutor' (in contrast to the traditional academic title of 'lecturer') label EAP as 'other' and therefore have a stigmatising function. This meaning appeared to undermine practitioners' academic master status. Those who suggested that the 'lecturer' job title was more appropriate for EAP practitioners appeared to be aligning themselves with the 'out-group' or 'normals' (Goffman, 1968) in order to manage impressions of their own identity construction as academics.

Another indication that some participants positioned themselves as having stigmatised identities was the various derogatory terms they used to refer to themselves or the profession, including 'Cinderellas', 'pond life' or 'poor relations'. This *looking-glass self* (Cooley, 1998) construction of EAP as stigmatised suggests a vulnerability or insecurity on the part of practitioners who may be struggling to find a space within the academy. In contrast, there were participants who viewed job titles such as 'teacher' or 'tutor' as more representative of their identities than the title 'lecturer', which was often associated with the teaching practice of 'lecturing'. The tutor/teacher titles appeared to allow them to assert their pride in their own professional practice and identity as effective teachers. They therefore appeared to embrace the 'in-group' (Goffman, 1968) of support service workers in preferring these job titles.

A further theme related both to stigmatised identities and a lack of understanding of EAP was the attempt on the part of some interviewees to engage in boundary maintenance (Johnston *et al*, 1994) in the form of distancing EAP from EFL. Those who engaged in this boundary maintenance appeared to be attempting to manage impressions in response to a looking-glass conception of EAP as 'just language teaching' – a meaning they did not attach to their own practice − and to carve out an academic identity that was separate from this stigmatised identity. However, there were participants who challenged arguments in the literature that EAP is much more than language teaching, and there were those who noted that this boundary maintenance might have the function of creating hierarchies in EAP, thus contributing to a more fragmented identity.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many of the issues facing EAP are inextricably linked with the neoliberal model of higher education that has emerged in the last few decades, and the resulting commodification of EAP – both as a marketing device to attract international students and a means of generating income. This positioning of EAP as a commercial entity has implications for practitioner identity. Some of the interviewees appeared to associate successful income-generation with increased power and recognition within their institutions, thereby allowing them to construct secure identities and to feel a sense of autonomy and agency, even when positioned outside of the academic functions of the university.

However, some participants associated this profit-making function with increased vulnerability, particularly those on fixed-term contracts whose job security depended on the vagaries of the market. This vulnerability was also expressed through a fear of privatisation, which appeared to represent the most extreme form of commodification for

interviewees. The positioning of private providers as separate from the university appeared to pose a threat to some participants' academic or professional identities, and the working practices of these providers were associated with a lack of professional autonomy. There was also a frequent perception that their profit-seeking imperative would value costs over education, thus undermining participants' effective teacher identities. Nonetheless, despite a frequent positioning of privatisation as a major threat to EAP, several participants pointed out that public universities engage in similar practices to private providers, such as imposing heavy teaching loads and reducing entry requirements.

The final theme that emerged was the relationship between EAP identity and scholarship or scholarly activity. Although interviewees seemed to construct a shared meaning regarding the importance of scholarship or scholarly activity to their professional identities, they did not all attach the same meanings to the relationship between different types of research or scholarship and EAP. For example, some participants presented the absence of a research remit in EAP contracts as a rationale for tutor/teacher job titles and the positioning of EAP in service departments, while others expressed the view that in order to avoid being positioned outside of academic activities, EAP practitioners should assume a more academic identity by engaging in research.

However, there did seem to be a common view that practice-based research and informed practice were key aspects of EAP professional identity, again emphasising the effective teacher identity that threaded through the interviews. This identity as classroom practitioner also seemed to be a factor in the ambivalence on the part of some interviewees towards PhD study in the sense that they did not see its value for practice. Nevertheless,

there were those who viewed the pursuit of PhD study as valuable to the field, and this may be because they constructed their identities as both academics and effective teachers. Finally, although practitioners expressed a commitment to scholarly activity, they also cited barriers to engagement in the form of time constraints and limited access to funding. This could have an effect on how practitioners construct their own identities around scholarship, since, if they do not have the resources to engage in academic activities, they may be reluctant to identify as academics.

### *7.2.3 Implications of these identity constructions*

The third research question asked what implications these identity constructions appear to have for practitioners and the profession. Answers to this research question have, to some extent, featured in the findings related to the first two research questions, but this section will articulate some implications more explicitly. The main implication of these identity constructions is that, as suggested above, the lack of shared meanings with regard to EAP identity results in a fragmented profession. EAP's current liminal positioning between academic activities and support services means that practitioners appear to attach different meanings to the role of EAP in higher education and construct their identities in terms of one set of activities or the other. This suggests that EAP needs to carve out a unique identity for itself, as expressed by a number of participants. However, attempts to carve out this identity by distancing EAP from EFL may alienate practitioners who construct their identities around their EFL backgrounds. It may also create hierarchies in the field by suggesting that novice EAP practitioners with an EFL background are somehow 'other' within the profession.

Another implication is that practitioners might be alienated by discourses of marginalisation and stigmatisation if they do not attach the same meanings to these discourses or view them as reflective of their own identities and practice settings. As discussed above, some interviewees resisted these discourses, which they perceived to be prevalent 'in EAP circles' (Mike). This may result in increased fragmentation if they do not align themselves with this "collective 'we'" (Johnston *et al*, 1994) that is often presented in the literature.

The core 'effective teacher' identity emerging from the data has implications for practitioners who face barriers to fulfilling the roles attached to that identity. Profit-making imperatives and cost-cutting measures in many EAP departments, as well as the seasonal nature of much EAP practice, mean that practitioners are frequently employed on part-time or fixed-term contracts with very little job security and heavy teaching loads. They might have little time or few resources to engage in professional development, and their heavy workloads may make it difficult for them to perform as the effective teachers they believe themselves to be. This, in turn, may result in disarticulated identities and alienation from the profession. Arguments in the literature for a more research-active practitioner and a profession that is more closely aligned with Ding and Bruce's (2017) academic field model may further alienate them if they do not have access to the support and resources needed to fulfil that role.

In summary, the participants appeared to attach different meanings to the issues discussed in the interviews, and a picture emerged of a fragmented professional EAP identity. This reflects arguments made in the literature that EAP in the UK is a disparate profession due in part to the enormous range of roles undertaken by practitioners and different

positionings of EAP within institutions. This is reflected in the sense that the working contexts of the participants in this study often had a bearing on the meanings they attached to certain issues. The strong themes of marginalisation and stigmatisation that emerged from the interviews also contribute to a picture of a fragmented profession. The only constructions of identity that could really be viewed as collective were participants' positioning of themselves as effective teachers, and as teachers engaged in professional development through scholarship and scholarly activity. This fragmented identity is neatly summed up in this comment from one of the interviewees:

> I think within EAP people are unsure as to what they do, and who they are, and where they belong in the English language teaching world, and I think it's evident across institutions that institutions don't know where we fit either, so I see us as displaced or lost
>
> - Rebecca

## 7.3 Contribution to the field

The increasing attention to EAP practitioner identity in the literature over the past few years is a very welcome development. Ding and Bruce's (2017) book and Bell's (2016) PhD thesis provide an extremely useful picture of the current position of EAP within higher education, and both works illuminate the issues facing the profession very clearly. Hadley's (2015) large study of practitioners working in the 'third space' in academia (Whitchurch, 2008) in particular, provides a much-needed insight into the identities of EAP practitioners from their own perspectives. However, apart from these fairly recent publications, there has been a paucity of literature to date on the subject of practitioner identity, particularly that which examines the views of practitioners themselves. The literature on identity to date has tended to examine how EAP has developed and how it is

positioned in academia. This study, on the other hand, investigates who we *are* and the implications of this both for our practice and our identity.

This project, therefore, contributes to the field by providing a rich understanding of how a group of EAP practitioners view their own professional identity, and how they construct that identity in relation to debates in the EAP literature. It also contributes to the field by providing a new theoretical perspective on EAP identity. I am not aware of any other studies that have used Symbolic Interactionism as a theoretical framework to examine EAP identity despite the plethora of studies on professional identities which have benefitted from this theoretical insight. This framework gave me new insights into the professional identity of EAP practitioners because it required me to ask how and *why* my participants constructed their identities in particular ways, and to be reflexive about my own positioning within debates in the field. It therefore provides a deeper understanding of EAP professional identity.

## 7.4 Implications for professional practice

The main implication for practice is the need for a greater understanding of practitioners themselves. EAP faces many difficulties, and, in order to respond to those issues, we need a degree of shared understanding of what they are. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the different meanings that practitioners attach to issues around professional identity and to gain an understanding of why EAP identities appear to be fragmented. The way in which EAP identity is constructed in the literature may alienate those practitioners who do not recognise that positioning in their own working lives, or who may view their own identities in a different way. We also need to be careful about forcing idealised views

of the profession onto other practitioners and thereby further alienating them from the profession.

A more specific implication is the need to consider the effects of these fragmented identities on teaching, and how practitioners are enabled to do their jobs. Practitioners who feel alienated and marginalised within their profession are likely to find it difficult to engage in their work effectively. The commodification of EAP may be seen to impact on practitioners' identity as effective teachers, so, as a profession, we need to find ways to mitigate those impacts. We also need to consider how the notion of service as a marketing device or a 'commercial contractual relationship' (Ding, 2016:14), rather than an attempt to facilitate students' journey through academia, may impact on our ability to fulfil the moral imperative of the professional service ethic (Carr, 2006; Nixon *et al,* 2001) resulting in a need for increased 'emotion work' (Hochschild, 1979) and greater professional disarticulation (Hadley, 2015).

Another key implication for practice is the importance of scholarship and scholarly activity to EAP professional identity. As a number of authors (e.g. Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017) have argued, scholarship is crucial to the increased professionalisation of EAP as an academic discipline. Positioning EAP as a more academic activity should increase the cultural capital of practitioners and help to mitigate problems of marginalisation within higher education. However, this needs to be considered in the light of the meanings practitioners themselves attach to scholarship, and to take account of barriers to the engagement in such activity, including the privileging "of particular epistemological and ontological perspectives and frameworks" (Burke, 2012:36) that occurs in higher education. Perhaps the EAP profession could play a greater role in

challenging beliefs around the kind of knowledge that is valued in higher education, and engaging in subversive negotiations of face (Moore, 2017) in the form of practitioner-based research that feeds *up* rather than following the traditional model of academic knowledge that feeds *down* from academic researchers. This may enable the profession to carve out a new space in academia that affords them greater agency and better fits the complex EAP identity comprised of academic, support and effective teacher identities.

Finally, in order to create a more collective identity, EAP needs to have a cohesive community of some kind. The fragmented nature of practitioner identity makes it difficult for practitioners to form an effective community of practice (Wenger, 2006) if they do not share meanings with regard to their professional identity. The neoliberal model of higher education, which encourages competition rather than collegiality, and the loss of trust in professionals engendered by the audit society (Power, 1999), may also serve to isolate practitioners from one another (Kupfer, 2008). The experiences of my participants in terms of their professional engagement suggest that EAP *is* an effective community of practice in many ways, but perhaps this community needs to find means of creating a better sense of identity and belonging. Despite the fragmented identities of the participants in this study, there was a strong sense of purpose, professionalism and a desire to be effective teachers. As Clegg (2008) points out, traditional academic identities tended to be the province of those who were "white, male and middle class" (Clegg, 2008:331), and that these identities are indeed under threat. However, changes in higher education have allowed opportunities for differences in academic identity to be validated (Clegg, 2008). Therefore, these powerful aspects of EAP identity could be marshalled to create a more effective community of practice, which might convey more agency to EAP practitioners by valorising their difference from the 'traditional' academic.

These implications have been discussed in terms of EAP professionals, but the study has similar implications for other professionals operating in liminal spaces or as para-professionals. These spaces or roles may create fragmented identities which, in turn, make it difficult for professionals to perform their roles. Therefore, it is important to gain an understanding of the identities of those engaged in these roles.

## 7.5 Further research

As noted above, the fragmented identities that have emerged here, and the lack of shared meanings regarding a number of discussions in the EAP literature, suggest the need for a greater understanding of the views of practitioners at the chalkface in EAP. A number of areas that might be a useful focus of further research have emerged from this study.

As scholarship seems to be a means of further professionalising the discipline − and appears to be an area in which EAP identity is particularly fragmented and which faces many barriers to engagement − perhaps more research could be done into practitioners' engagement with scholarship, its importance to their identities, and how barriers might be overcome. Another theme that emerged from the study was the perception that managing impressions by 'shouting loudly' seemed to be an effective means of integrating EAP within the academy for several my participants. Hence, it might be useful to conduct research into the impression management techniques used by practitioners within their institutions and what might be learned from their experiences. Finally, there seemed to be both an overlap and a tension between the two core identities of academic and support service revealed by my interviewees. A study into how practitioners navigate

this tension and position themselves within these identities might provide a richer insight into EAP identity.

## 7.6 Future Action

In light of the findings of this study, I plan to undertake the following actions. The findings suggest a need for a better understanding of practitioners themselves and a degree of shared meaning of what it means to be an EAP practitioner. One way in which I can contribute to this shared meaning is by making the findings of this study more public. I will, therefore, attempt to publish articles in key journals such as the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP)* or *Teaching in Higher Education* in order to contribute to the creation of a more 'strongly bounded' (Beck and Young, 2005:185) EAP identity both in terms of sharing my research and in engaging in traditional research activity. I hope this will also contribute to the positioning of EAP as an academic field rather than a support service and thereby help professionalise the field. It is particularly important that I attempt to publish in JEAP because, although it is the only EAP-specific journal, it publishes very few articles on practitioner development and identity (Ding and Bruce, 2017), which is something I feel needs to change. If I can reach the EAP audience through this forum, it should, at the very least, encourage reflection and debate around these issues.

A second way to contribute to shared meanings is to encourage discussion of our own lived experience of EAP within our community of practice. I can do this by presenting my research findings at conferences and PIMs (BALEAP, 2019) in order to generate further discussion. I have presented some of my research at previous conferences and plan to continue doing so. I gave a paper at the recent BALEAP conference in Leeds in April

2019 and was heartened to note the number of presentations on issues around practitioner identity, scholarship and development. I hope to prolong this interest. I also plan to continue this discussion at the everyday level with my colleagues, as well as encouraging them to engage in research through small-scale studies or doctoral research. Another aim is to support less experienced colleagues in engaging in scholarship, for example, by offering to present with them or conduct research with them.

Finally, as discussed in the section on further research above, it is important to find out more about practitioner identities and the issues that impact on these identities. Thus, once I have endeavoured to disseminate my research, I plan to take my findings forward by engaging in further research. Impression management emerged as an effective means of mitigating the misunderstood nature of EAP, and thereby reducing its marginalisation within the academy and further embedding our units in universities. Thus, I would like to investigate what impression management strategies practitioners have used within their institutions and how effective they deem these to have been.

## 7.7 Reflections and limitations

This final section reflects on the impact this project has had on my identity as a researcher and a practitioner, and on the possible limitations of this study. The greatest benefit has been my development as a researcher. Through this study, I have explored my field from an entirely new perspective. When I began the project, I had a somewhat normative stance towards the field and fairly rigid views about how it should develop. My discussions with practitioners have given me a much deeper and more nuanced understanding of the field and the issues facing it today. My theoretical framework provided me with ways of seeing that I had never considered before. It also encouraged me to be far more reflexive about

my positioning and to question my own assumptions about the field of EAP and my identity within it. This helped me to understand the role of my own identity and perspectives in the construction of knowledge around professional identity.

On a practical level, I have learnt much about research – both theoretical and empirical – and feel I have a much greater understanding of how to plan and implement a research project. I am now much more confident about embarking on further research. I also immensely enjoyed the interview aspect of this research and feel my interviewing skills improved dramatically over the course of the 17 interviews.

It is also important to reflect on the limitations of this study. Because qualitative research does not aim to produce generalisable findings, but rather to gain a rich understanding of a particular phenomenon, I did not expect these findings to be generalisable to the EAP profession as a whole. Nevertheless, I do need to acknowledge that the small sample size only provides a picture of the identities of those participants. Furthermore, the participants were self-selecting in that they volunteered in response to an email I sent to the BALEAP discussion list. Their membership of BALEAP, and their willingness to be involved in my study, suggests a level of engagement with the profession that may not be representative of others in the field.

Although the breadth of my choice of methodology gave me a great deal of flexibility and a number of theories to draw on, its vastness was also constraining in the sense that it was rather intimidating, and it took me some time to grasp the theoretical principles and understand how they might help me understand my data. This was, to a large extent, because I initially focused all of my reading on the theory, and it was hard to conceptualise

how it might be used as a research methodology. However, when I transferred my attention to publications of research that used SI theories, it greatly improved my understanding of how the theory could be applied as a means of analysis.

Exploring identity is a messy task, and a qualitative approach requires the researcher to interpret and co-construct meaning with her informants. Thus, the way I position my own identity is a fundamental part of my role of researcher in the co-construction of meaning, and this positioning, therefore, needs to be made explicit in order to maintain authenticity. I have therefore aimed to maintain a reflexive stance throughout this study, being as open and detailed as possible about my views on EAP identity, so as to reveal my own position in the interpretation of my participants' views of their own identities.

Another limitation of this study is the lack of any reference to critical EAP, a research stream that arose in response to a tendency for EAP to be framed as a pragmatic, non-ideological field responding to the needs of students studying within a global economy (Benesch, 2001). Authors who challenge this framing (e.g. Benesch, 1993, 1994, 1996, 2001, 2009; Canagarajah, 2001, 2002; Chun, 2009; Pennycook, 1994; Starfield, 2001) argue that pragmatism in EAP represents an unquestioning acceptance of the power relations inherent in English as a global language and within academia. The term 'critical EAP' is largely associated with the work of Sarah Benesch, who questions the "myth of neutrality" (1993:706) inherent in a pragmatic approach to teaching English, arguing that the materials teachers choose, their methodologies, and the way they assess students are all ideological choices that suggest a desire to perpetuate the status quo (Benesch, 1993). Proponents of critical EAP argue for an approach to the teaching of EAP which questions the power structures framing higher education in English-speaking countries. This seems

an important area for discussion, particularly in light of the current neoliberal model of higher education which appears to be more concerned with producing a workforce (Rowland, 2002) than developing critical thinkers. Therefore, in hindsight, I should have introduced this as a topic for discussion in the interviews.

A final limitation is that, due to the semi-structured nature of the interview schedule, topics arose later during the series of interviews that, in hindsight, I wish I had discussed in earlier interviews. This is always a risk in conducting in-depth interviews but using a more structured approach would greatly limit the richness of the data and the agency of the participants in discussing topics that were important to them.

As a final note, an unexpected benefit of this project was its effect on my classroom practice. I teach a large number of postgraduate students, and most of that teaching is related to their writing. I had thought I had a good understanding of the difficulties they faced, but as it has been some time since I completed my master's degree, the struggles associated with academic writing had become somewhat hazy. This project reintroduced me to the agonies of writing and gave me a renewed understanding and empathy for my students' difficulties, especially as almost all of them are writing in a foreign language.

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## APPENDIX A: THE EAP CONTEXT

Although a relatively new profession, EAP has developed rapidly since its emergence in the 1960s (Jordan, 2002). It has produced a rich body of research into areas such as classroom methodology, discourse analysis and assessment methods (Hamp-Lyons, 2001) "supported by a burgeoning weight of journals, books, conferences and doctoral dissertations" (Hyland, 2012:30). It has its own academic journal, the Journal of English for Academic Purposes (JEAP), and its own professional organisation, BALEAP (BALEAP, 2019). Despite this progress, EAP practitioners face a number of difficulties in their professional practice – many related to the broader structural factors affecting higher education – and authors frequently position EAP as having a marginalised status within higher education in the UK (e.g. Ding and Bruce, 2017; Fulcher, 2009; Turner, 2012).

The EAP profession is quite disparate in nature, with practitioners occupying a wide range of roles accompanied by different conditions of employment (Ding and Bruce, 2017). EAP practitioners tend to be employed under a range of job titles including 'lecturer', 'teacher' and 'tutor', but the majority of EAP positions advertised in the UK seem to have the title 'teacher' or 'tutor'. These titles tend to be linked to different, usually inferior, working contracts to those employed as 'lecturers'. In this study, I use the term 'practitioner' to avoid this contested nomenclature, but also to indicate that, although the main role of most EAP practitioners is teaching, they also engage in other academic activities (Charles and Pecorari, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017).

EAP departments are often located within non-academic units such as professional services or student services (Hamp-Lyons, 2011), where practitioners – usually

contracted as ‘teachers’ or ‘tutors’ − are constructed “as language experts rather than academics” (Burke and Hermerschmidt, 2005:348). EAP units located in academic departments are more likely to employ practitioners on more traditional ‘lecturer’ contracts, but this is not always the case. In addition to the marginalisation of EAP units in non-academic domains within public universities, a frequently expressed concern within the field is the increased outsourcing of EAP provision – largely foundation programmes – to private providers (e.g. Kaplan, INTO, Study Group). Concerns regarding private provision include the further marginalisation of EAP through its separation from the academy, the less-attractive working conditions and contracts often associated with private providers (Bell, 2016), and reduced opportunities for scholarship due to heavy teaching loads and lack of allocated resources (Fulcher, 2009). However, as these practices are by no means the sole preserve of private providers (Hadley, 2015), concerns might be better directed at the broader structural factors involved.

There is also a variety of roles in terms of the teaching activities and other responsibilities involved. In the UK, EAP is usually taught in three main forms: foundation/pre-master’s, pre-sessional and insessional courses. Foundation year programmes are a bridge between secondary school and university for those students, usually from other countries, whose school qualifications are not equivalent to A-level qualifications. They normally have two components: so-called ‘content’ courses in subjects relevant to the students’ future study, and courses in EAP to prepare students who do not speak English as a first language (hereafter L2 students) for academic study in English. They may take the form of foundation programmes, for pre-undergraduates, or pre-master’s programmes for those aiming to progress to postgraduate study but whose undergraduate degree qualifications are not considered to be at an equivalent level to UK degrees.

Pre-sessional courses are also preparation courses for students hoping to progress to degree study, but they only comprise EAP courses and are designed to help students reach the English level required for the programme on which they wish to enrol at a particular university. Most of those who enrol on them hold offers for degree programmes that are conditional on their reaching a particular level of English – evidenced either by a particular score on a standardised English language test such as IELTS (IELTS, 2018) or TOEFL (ETS, 2019), or a particular grade on an EAP course. However, some who hold unconditional offers choose to take the course to brush up on their English and acculturate themselves into the UK higher education system before embarking on their main study programmes. Pre-sessionals typically take place over the summer so that students who pass can progress directly onto their degree programmes, but they vary a great deal in length, with some universities offering year-long pre-sessionals (e.g. University of Birmingham, 2019) and the shortest being around two weeks long (e.g. University of Greenwich, no date), and they tend to be very highly subscribed.

Insessional courses are taught during the academic year alongside degree programmes and aim to support students during their degree study. They may take the form of accredited or unaccredited modules, and EAP practitioners often offer one-to-one support in addition to these courses. They may be subject-specific English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) courses or English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) courses (Blue, 1988). Traditionally they have been designed for L2 students, but increasing numbers of native speakers of English (hereafter L1 students) are being catered for.

Contract types also vary, with some practitioners on permanent full-time contracts, but probably the majority on temporary contracts due to the high level of employment on summer pre-sessional courses (Bell, 2016; Ding and Bruce, 2017). Because of the fluctuating nature of EAP enrolment, it is convenient for universities to employ a core group of experienced EAP staff who manage and develop programmes during the academic year – as well as providing insessional support to students on degree programmes − and then recruit teachers on temporary contracts to deliver pre-sessional courses for a short period of the year. This means that a large number of EAP practitioners are employed on fixed-term contracts and face a great deal of insecurity regarding availability of future work (Fulcher, 2009). The intensive nature of many EAP courses also results in heavy teaching loads for the large majority of EAP practitioners (Hadley, 2015).

The activities practitioners are required to engage in also vary widely, often linked to the kinds of contracts on which they are employed and the courses on which they teach. Practitioners may be employed in 'teaching only' posts (Hamp-Lyons, 2011) – this typically occurs on pre-sessional courses – in which their only duties are to teach using materials provided to them and to mark students' work, while others – often in more permanent roles − may be responsible for designing curricula, writing syllabi, and producing teaching materials and assessments. As the name suggests, these 'teaching-only' posts do not make provision for scholarly activity (Hamp-Lyons, 2011), which means practitioners are obliged to engage in this activity in their free time – a difficult task in the light of their often heavy teaching loads. Another difficulty is that access to funding for this activity is not always available (Ding and Bruce, 2017). However, a small number of universities treat their EAP practitioners more like traditional academics by

encouraging them to engage in and publish research in addition to their teaching, course development and assessment responsibilities (Ding and Bruce, 2017).

## APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- Describe your background:
    - Experience in EAP/ELT
    - Qualifications
    - Current employment; job title; type of contract
    - Physical and administrative position in university
- Does your positioning have any effect on your work?
- Regarding the idea of a 'professional' and the meanings people attach to that word:
    - What do you consider a professional to be?
    - Do you consider yourself to be a professional?
- What do you consider your professional identity to be?
- How do you see yourself fitting into higher education as a professional?
    - And how do you see yourself fitting into the EAP profession?
- How would you describe the status of EAP practitioners in higher education?
    - Does your status mirror what you perceive that of other EAP practitioners to be?
- Does your own professional status influence how you engage in your work?
    - What elements of your work are influenced by your professional identity?
    - Would changes to your professional status affect how you engage in your work?
- What qualifications do you think EAP practitioners should have? Are qualifications important? Do we need an EAP qualification?
- Do you think EAP practitioners have a comparable role to other academics?
    - What do they have in common and how are they different?
- How do you think others in the academy view you?
    - Do you view yourself in the same way?
    - Does others' view of your work affect how you view yourself?
- In job descriptions, EAP practitioners are more often referred to as 'tutors' or 'teachers' than as lecturers. Does this matter to you?
- Are there any aspects of your professional status/identity that you would like to improve?
- Are there any aspects of the profession that you feel need to develop?
- Are there any aspects of the profession that you think other academics could learn from?

<u>Questions added over course of interviews</u>

- Do you share office space?
- What do you think about private EAP providers?
- Where do you think EAP departments should be positioned?
- EAP is sometimes problematised as being too pragmatic in nature. What is your view?
- We are often referred to as 'support', which has been the critiqued in the literature. What do you think about this terminology?
- Are there hierarchies in EAP?
- How do you feel about BALEAP? Are they helpful?
- Do you have a dress code where you work?
- Do you receive any funding for professional development?
- Do you get time for scholarship built into your contract?

## APPENDIX C: OVERVIEW OF THE PARTICIPANTS

| Pseudonym | Job title | Contract type | Experience | Highest qualification + teaching qualification |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Jane** | Senior lecturer | Permanent | 25 years in ELT; 12 of those in EAP | CELTA, about to submit PhD in EAP |
| **Ingrid** | EAP Teacher | Permanent | 1 year in EAP | CELTA, MA Applied Linguistics |
| **Paul** | Pathways Manager | Permanent | Over 20 years in ELT, over 7 years EAP | MA + MPhil Anglophone Studies, CELTA |
| **Maria** | Teaching Associate | Fixed term | 14 years in ELT/ESP; 2 pre-sessionals in EAP | MEd |
| **Pete** | EAP Tutor | Fixed term (soon to be permanent) | 25 years in ELT, about 5 years in EAP | CELTA, Delta; undergraduate degree |
| **Dave** | - | Freelance | Over 40 years in ELT, ESP and EAP | MA Applied Linguistics |
| **Kim** | EAP Tutor (soon to be Lecturer) | Permanent | 13 years in ELT; several years in EAP | MA Ancient Greek, Delta |
| **Emily** | EAP Tutor (soon to be Lecturer) | Permanent | About 20 years in ELT; 5 of those in EAP | CELTA; Delta, doing MA TEAP |
| **Mike** | EAP Tutor | Permanent | About 14 years in ELT; about 5 of those in EAP | MA Applied Linguistics and TESOL |
| **Sue** | EFL Tutor | Fixed term | 14 years in ELT; about 5 of those in EAP | CELTA; PGCE ESOL; MA Applied Linguistics |
| **Ildiko** | EAP Subject Leader | Permanent | 32 years in ELT | PhD US Literature; PhD Applied Linguistics |
| **Tina** | EAP Lecturer | 0.5 permanent | 30 years in ELT, 6 of those in EAP | PhD |
| **Rebecca** | EAP Tutor | Permanent | 11 years in EFL/ESOL, 6 of those in EAP | CELTA; Delta, MA Media & Culture |
| **Steve** | Senior Language Tutor | Permanent | 36 years in ELT, more than 20 years in EAP | Cert Ed, DELTA, PhD |
| **Maureen** | Course director | Permanent | 5 years in ELT, then 18 in EAP | TEFL course, Delta, MA TESOL |
| **Beth** | Lecturer | Permanent | At least 7 years in ELT, Writing and EAP | MA ESP, CELTA |
| **Graham** | Not employed | Fixed term (previously) | Two EAP pre-sessionals; about 11 years in EFL | CELTA, BA English Language and Linguistics |

## APPENDIX D: EXAMPLES OF DATA CODING PROCESS

### Examples of initial open coding

*Codes*

Physical and organisational location
How we talk about ourselves
- Metalanguage/nomenclature/labelling
- Psychological positioning

Research and scholarly activity
Professionalism/professional identity
Qualifications

### Jane

*ST: Tell me about your unit, or whatever it's called. How is it positioned within the university both physically and psychologically, if you like?*
J: My university, my department is called Name of University International. We've gone through a number of name changes. We used to be called International Centre of English Language but we haven't got the English language anymore; we're called International, which I think is a good change because it reflects the fact that a lot of what we do is not *just* English language which is the typical thing that people say to try to make you feel that your work is not worthwhile.

How do we fit? Well we've been knocked around the university in terms of where we sit. When I first started we were in the School of Languages, which at that time was quite large; it had lots of languages, like Russian, which are not taught anymore. It has got a lot smaller. Soon after I arrived, I don't know why, we were required to leave the School of Languages and we were taken over by a part of the university called Name of Institute, which is the part of my university that runs the PGSE and courses in religion. That was the sort of group or area we were put under. Then I think a new dean came and didn't like the look of us, so we had to leave again and we moved to Corporate Affairs, which is a directorate – my university changed to faculties and directorates a few years ago. We didn't fit again, so we were put in this Directorate of Corporate Affairs which includes parts of the university such as the print room, marketing, student experience type things. So we were the only academics in the whole department, not department because we're a department, but in this directorate. When we have whole directorate staff development days, it's quite strange because we don't have a lot in common with the people in the print room!

So that's where we are. As we still don't really fit there, we tried to get moved to the Faculty of business because the majority of our EAP students do go on to Business, but we're in an odd situation because the Faculty of Business are our academic quality overseers, so they are responsible for our periodic review and changes go through them because they were the only faculty who were willing to work with us. Having said that, I think what's happened is that a lot of staff such as myself have been there a long time and have established a lot of links

around my university, so although we are not in a particularly comfortable space in terms of our structure, we don't suffer quite as much as some units that are completely separate and have nothing to do with the rest of the university. We have a lot of links between our programmes, a lot of liaison. So for me on the pre-masters I have a large range of contacts around my university on master's programmes that I can consult; I can find out things; I can liaise about particular students. And I think at that level we are very lucky that we have a lot of contact with the others.

*ST: But was that a result of your experience and contacts rather than the way things work within the university?*
J: That's part of it, and that is certainly partly due to our efforts. But there is a certain recognition that we are not just a much lower department; not among everybody, but there is some recognition

### Rebecca

R: We're in Corporate Services. When I joined we were part of an academic department– modern languages, and the senior tutors who were here were on academic posts – so now it's moved very much into teaching staff and part of corporate services.

*ST: How would you define a professional?*
R: That's a good question. I think it's somebody who works in a field that has …I guess standards and training within that field, so there's some idea of training courses, professional bodies that you can be a member of. If you have those sorts of things, I think you can say you are a professional within a certain field.

*ST: Would you consider yourself to be one?*
R: Yes.

*ST: What would you consider your professional identity to be?*
R: I'm an EAP practitioner, and I operate within the field of EAP and strive to perform at the best level I can within that, so taking part in initiatives like the BALEAP TEAP Competency Accreditation scheme, that sort of thing, searching for ways to kind of rubber stamp that belief that I'm part of a wider profession.

*ST: What do you call yourself to lay people?*
R: I say I teach international students at university who need help with their English before they go on to their academic programmes.

*ST: How do you see yourself fitting into higher education as a professional?*
R: It's always been really important for me to be an equal with other teaching staff, so for that reason it was as important for me to go for HEA Senior Fellowship status as it was for the BALEAP. Although BALEAP is brilliant, the university lecturers don't understand what it is. So to say I'm an HEA Senior Fellow, instantly peers around the university can understand at what level I operate, because for the EAP means little. I make a conscious effort to try not to refer to academics versus EAP practitioners.

*ST: Would you call yourself an academic?*
R: Not in my current post, which I'm leaving in a couple of weeks for an academic post. Again that's quite important to me. I can't realistically in the post I'm in because it would just feel fraudulent – I 'm not involved in research other than things you do in your own time, but we're constantly reminded we're not a research department

*ST: So you think to be an academic you need to be a researcher?*
R:: I think there's a perception of that. I'm not sure how far I agree with that. At my university, for example, they've recently changed promotion routes so that there's two options, a teaching route and a research route. I think that's very telling. I don't think the two parts are mutually exclusive, they're both important in being an academic for me.

So I think that's a strength that we have, but I think senior management here are very much keen to push that we're a *language* teaching unit, and for me I think we do a lot more than that. It's their belief I think. I think it's about not getting too involved with content because we're not specialists in that area, and they all come from an ELT background, and for me, I'd like to see EAP divorce itself more from that, personally. So that's where they've come from and they have staunchly held beliefs that we're language teachers and nothing more.

*ST: What is the new role you're starting?*
R: Senior lecturer.

*ST: Do those titles have any importance for you. Do you think it's important what we're called in EAP?*
R: Yes, but I don't know what it should be. I think it should be the same across the board, so I'm happy to be a senior lecturer if all teaching staff in the university are called lecturers. That's what I'm used to in FE; we were all lecturers and I don't like the divisions that exist – nobody knows where to put us or who to label us.

*ST: Some people have said the division is quite simple because we don't do research and lecturers do, and EAP practitioners are usually tutors/teachers, so it's an easy division.*
R: I don't think I agree with that. If it was based on research then 'academics', if you like, would be researchers not lecturers. Lecturing is teaching. I don't see a lecturer role as a researcher; that's something else they do that either informs their teaching or furthers their academic career or whatever, but we're all doing the same thing. Even as EAP practitioners it's informed by research so we should have the same label.

### Graham

*ST: How would you define a professional?*
G: Well ideally, it's someone who's been trained for a particular job. It's one which needs a high level of education. That's it really; that's all it really should be. There are lots of other connotations which are attached to that word, which I don't see myself really, but that's about it.

*ST: Do you consider yourself to be a professional?*
G: I'd like to be a professional in the sense that I like the word. I wouldn't want to be a professional in the sense that other people use that word. There's a bit of inverted snobbery there.

*ST: Could you explain what you mean and the difference between what you think others think and what you think? What do you dislike about how others see it?*
G: Well anybody who wears a smart suit likes to call himself a professional. It's a word that gets bandied about a lot and loses a lot of real meaning, which is used as a kind of status symbol to say that I am something better than you.

*ST: So you think it's often used as a way position yourself above other people?*
G: I think so, certainly in my experience. I worked in IT for many years before teaching and the amount of pseudo professionalism that you find there.

*ST: How do you see yourself fitting into HE as a professional? [11:23]*
G: At the moment I only have a first degree so I'm not the best qualified. Universities by their nature are very very status conscious – you need to have lots of pieces of paper – so I'm at the very bottom at the end of the scale, and I'll accept that; I don't mind that. I don't really care about that as long as I'm enjoying what I'm doing. Maybe one day I will progress, I'm certainly taking one or two steps in that direction. And when I have one or two more scraps of paper to wave about, then perhaps I can look down on other people instead of them looking down on me. I don't think it's going to make a scrap of difference how many bits of paper I have or haven't got to how good or bad I am.

*ST: How do you see yourself fitting into the EAP profession?*
G: I'm not quite sure what you're getting at there. Well there are some bits of EAP which I enjoy perhaps more than others. We're not supposed to be like that, of course; we're supposed to be very professional. I always enjoy doing the reading and writing elements of EAP, and I always seem to do quite that as well. I seem to do well with one-to-one sessions with students. I think one day I'd like to progress a bit beyond the classroom and perhaps do a bit of mentoring.

*ST: There's a lot of talk about the status of EAP practitioners. How do you see it?*
G: Well really, we're only teachers. We're not in the same league as a university lecturer. We're not there to impart bodies of knowledge. We're language teachers really. And language teaching is acquiring a skill not imparting lots of knowledge in any way. I think EAP tries to raise itself to that kind of level and I think that's a bit of nonsense.

*ST: Would you say the status of EAP teachers is lower than lecturers?*
G: That's the way I see them. Maybe one day somebody's going to tell me that they're equal, that they're on a par. If that's true then why?

**Examples of second attempt at open coding**

*Codes*

Marginalisation
Stigmatisation
Professional/academic identity
Effective teacher identity
Importance of communication
Lack of understanding

## Jane

*ST: Tell me about your unit, or whatever it's called. How is it positioned within the university both physically and psychologically, if you like?*

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R: I don't think I agree with that. If it was based on research then 'academics', if you like, would be researchers not lecturers. Lecturing is teaching. I don't see a lecturer role as a researcher; that's something else they do that either informs their teaching or furthers their academic career or whatever, but we're all doing the same thing. Even as EAP practitioners it's informed by research so we should have the same label.

## Graham

*ST: How would you define a professional?*
G: Well ideally, it's someone who's been trained for a particular job. It's one which needs a high level of education. That's it really; that's all it really should be. There are lots of other

connotations which are attached to that word, which I don't see myself really, but that's about it.

*ST: Do you consider yourself to be a professional?*
G: I'd like to be a professional in the sense that I like the word. I wouldn't want to be a professional in the sense that other people use that word. There's a bit of inverted snobbery there.

*ST: Could you explain what you mean and the difference between what you think others think and what you think? What do you dislike about how others see it?*
G: Well anybody who wears a smart suit likes to call himself a professional. It's a word that gets bandied about a lot and loses a lot of real meaning, which is used as a kind of status symbol to say that I am something better than you.

*ST: So you think it's often used as a way position yourself above other people?*
G: I think so, certainly in my experience. I worked in IT for many years before teaching and the amount of pseudo professionalism that you find there.

*ST: How do you see yourself fitting into HE as a professional?*
G: At the moment I only have a first degree so I'm not the best qualified. Universities by their nature are very very status conscious – you need to have lots of pieces of paper – so I'm at the very bottom at the end of the scale, and I'll accept that; I don't mind that. I don't really care about that as long as I'm enjoying what I'm doing. Maybe one day I will progress, I'm certainly taking one or two steps in that direction. And when I have one or two more scraps of paper to wave about, then perhaps I can look down on other people instead of them looking down on me. I don't think it's going to make a scrap of difference how many bits of paper I have or haven't got to how good or bad I am.

*ST: How do you see yourself fitting into the EAP profession?*
G: I'm not quite sure what you're getting at there. Well there are some bits of EAP which I enjoy perhaps more than others. We're not supposed to be like that, of course; we're supposed to be very professional. I always enjoy doing the reading and writing elements of EAP, and I always seem to do quite that as well. I seem to do well with one-to-one sessions with students. I think one day I'd like to progress a bit beyond the classroom and perhaps do a bit of mentoring.

*ST: There's a lot of talk about the status of EAP practitioners. How do you see it?*
G: Well really, we're only teachers. We're not in the same league as a university lecturer. We're not there to impart bodies of knowledge. We're language teachers really. And language teaching is acquiring a skill not imparting lots of knowledge in any way. I think EAP tries to raise itself to that kind of level and I think that's a bit of nonsense.

*ST: Would you say the status of EAP teachers is lower than lecturers?*
G: That's the way I see them. Maybe one day somebody's going to tell me that they're equal, that they're on a par. If that's true then why?

**Examples of interpretative coding with notes on theory**

*Codes*

Marginalisation
Stigmatisation
Professional/academic identity
Effective teacher identity
Importance of communication
Lack of understanding

| Transcript | Notes |
|---|---|
| **Jane**<br>*ST: Tell me about your unit, or whatever it's called. How is it positioned within the university both physically and psychologically, if you like?*<br>J: My university, my department is called Name of University International. We've gone through a number of name changes. We used to be called International Centre of English Language but we haven't got the English language anymore; we're called International, which I think is a good change because it reflects the fact that a lot of what we do is not *just* English language which is the typical thing that people say to try to make you feel that your work is not worthwhile. | Stigmatised identities – perception that others don't think their work is worthwhile<br>Boundary maintenance – distancing EAP from EFL |
| How do we fit? Well we've been knocked around the university in terms of where we sit. When I first started we were in the School of Languages, which at that time was quite large; it had lots of languages, like Russian, which are not taught anymore. It has got a lot smaller. Soon after I arrived, I don't know why, we were required to leave the School of Languages and we were taken over by a part of the university called Name of Institute, which is the part of the university that runs the PGSE and courses in religion. That was the | Lack of agency; lack of recognition<br><br>Lack of agency due to marginalised status |

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| sort of group or area we were put under. Then I think a new dean came and didn't like the look of us, so we had to leave again and we moved to Corporate Affairs, which is a directorate – my university changed to faculties and directorates a few years ago. We didn't fit again, so we were put in this Directorate of Corporate Affairs which includes parts of the university such as the print room, marketing, student experience type things. So we were the only academics in the whole department, not department because we're a department, but in this directorate. When we have whole directorate staff development days, it's quite strange because we don't have a lot in common with the people in the print room!<br><br>So that's where we are. As we still don't really fit there, we tried to get moved to the Faculty of business because the majority of our EAP students do go on to Business, but we're in an odd situation because the Faculty of Business are our academic quality overseers, so they are responsible for our periodic review and changes go through them because they were the only faculty who were willing to work with us. Having said that, I think what's happened is that a lot of staff such as myself have been there a long time and have established a lot of links around the university, so although we are not in a particularly comfortable space in terms of our structure, we don't suffer quite as much as some units that are completely separate and have nothing to do with the rest of university. We have a lot of links between our programmes, a lot of liaison. So for me on the pre-masters I have a large range of contacts around the university on master's programmes that I can consult; I can find out things; I can liaise about particular students. And I think at that level we are very lucky that we have a lot of contact with the others.<br><br>*ST: But was that a result of your experience and contacts rather than the way things work within the university?* | *Looking-glass self*; marginalised; lack of agency; pushed out<br><br>Liminal space – no clear identity<br>Boundary maintenance – administrative positioning conflicts with view of herself as academic<br>Their 'setting' doesn't conform with the academic identity she attaches to herself<br>Marginalised – no clear identity<br>*Looking-glass self* – marginalised by others<br><br>Impression management mitigates marginalised identity<br><br>Impression management. Communication with others serves to mitigate marginalised identity |

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| J: That's part of it, and that is certainly partly due to our efforts. But there is a certain recognition that we are not just a much lower department; not among everybody, but there is some recognition | Lack of recognition mitigated by impression management strategies<br>Understanding = greater recognition |
| **Rebecca**<br><br>R: We're in Corporate Services. When I joined we were part of an academic department– Modern Languages, and the senior tutors who were here were on academic posts – so now it's moved very much into teaching staff and part of corporate services.<br><br>*ST: How would you define a professional?*<br>R: That's a good question. I think it's somebody who works in a field that has …I guess standards and training within that field, so there's some idea of training courses, professional bodies that you can be a member of. If you have those sorts of things, I think you can say you are a professional within a certain field.<br><br>*ST: Would you consider yourself to be one?*<br>R: Yes.<br><br>*ST: What would you consider your professional identity to be?*<br>R: I'm an EAP practitioner, and I operate within the field of EAP and strive to perform at the best level I can within that, so taking part in initiatives like the BALEAP TEAP Competency Accreditation scheme, that sort of thing, searching for ways to kind of rubber stamp that belief that I'm part of a wider profession. | Marginalised by positioning as teachers (not academics) in service department<br><br>Knowledge/training important for professional identity<br><br>So she feels she has the appropriate knowledge/training?<br><br>Impression management/labelling – avoids possible stigmatising labels: tutor or teacher<br>Impression management strategies<br>Front – insignia of rank; symbol of professionalism; why does she feel need to rubber stamp her professionalism? Insecurity? |

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| *ST: What do you call yourself to lay people?*<br>R: I say I teach international students at university who need help with their English before they go on to their academic programmes.<br><br>*ST: How do you see yourself fitting into HE as a professional?*<br>R: It's always been really important for me to be an equal with other teaching staff, so for that reason it was as important for me to go for HEA Senior Fellowship status as it was for the BALEAP. Although BALEAP is brilliant, the university lecturers don't understand what it is. So to say I'm an HEA Senior Fellow, instantly peers around the university can understand at what level I operate, because for the EAP means little. I make a conscious effort to try not to refer to academics versus EAP practitioners.<br><br>*ST: Would you call yourself an academic?*<br>R: Not in my current post, which I'm leaving in a couple of weeks for an academic post. Again that's quite important to me. I can't realistically in the post I'm in because it would just feel fraudulent – I 'm not involved in research other than things you do in your own time, but we're constantly reminded we're not a research department<br><br>*ST: So you think to be an academic you need to be a researcher?*<br>R:: I think there's a perception of that. I'm not sure how far I agree with that. At my university, for example, they've recently changed promotion routes so that there's two options, a teaching route and a research route. I think that's very telling. I don't think the two parts are mutually exclusive, they're both important in being an academic for me. | Perceived lack of understanding – can't say 'EAP practitioner' to lay people because they wouldn't understand<br><br>Looking glass self – uses 'insignias of rank' like HEA fellowship to manage impressions<br>Insecurity about who we are – 'others don't understand us'; therefore, need to manage impressions using recognised symbols like HEA fellowship<br>'peers' − constructs identity as academic<br>Impression management – avoids marginalising EAP<br>Stigmatised identity? Can't claim academic identity because not research active. Looking glass self – others may judge and find her lacking?<br>Importance of scholarship to EAP. Non-traditional research done 'in your own time' not valued. Marginalised by not being a research department<br><br>Appears to contradict previous statement – juggling her own identity construction with how she perceives others view her position (*looking-glass self*)? |

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| So I think that's a strength that we have, but I think senior management here are very much keen to push that we're a *language* teaching unit, and for me I think we do a lot more than that. It's their belief I think. I think it's about not getting too involved with content because we're not specialists in that area, and they all come from an ELT background, and for me, I'd like to see EAP divorce itself more from that, personally. So that's where they've come from and they have staunchly held beliefs that we're language teachers and nothing more. | Stigmatised identity based on perceived lack of understanding<br>Boundary maintenance – we are more than language teachers; distancing herself from EFL identity<br>Boundary maintenance – carving out EAP identity |
| *ST: What is the new role you're starting?*<br>R: Senior lecturer. | |
| *ST: Do those titles have any importance for you. Do you think it's important what we're called in EAP?*<br>R: Yes, but I don't know what it should be. I think it should be the same across the board, so I'm happy to be a senior lecturer if all teaching staff in the university are called lecturers. That's what I'm used to in FE; we were all lecturers and I don't like the divisions that exist – nobody knows where to put us or who to label us. | Potential stigmatising effect of labels<br><br>Lack of understanding linked to hierarchies and stigmatising labels |
| *ST: Some people have said the division is quite simple because we don't do research and lecturers do, and EAP practitioners are usually tutors/teachers, so it's an easy division.*<br>R: I don't think I agree with that. If it was based on research then 'academics', if you like, would be researchers not lecturers. Lecturing is teaching. I don't see a lecturer role as a researcher; that's something else they do that either informs their teaching or furthers their academic career or whatever, but we're all doing the same thing. Even as EAP practitioners it's informed by research, so we should have the same label. | Seems to contradict previous comment where she said she would fee 'fraudulent' calling herself an academic<br>Hybrid role as academic and effective teacher<br>Importance of scholarship for EAP practitioners – both as academic identity and effective teacher identity |

| **Graham** | |
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| *ST: How would you define a professional?*<br>G: Well ideally, it's someone who's been trained for a particular job. It's one which needs a high level of education. That's it really; that's all it really should be. There are lots of other connotations which are attached to that word, which I don't see myself really, but that's about it. | *Looking-glass self* – 'other connotations' |
| *ST: Do you consider yourself to be a professional?*<br>G: I'd like to be a professional in the sense that I like the word. I wouldn't want to be a professional in the sense that other people use that word. There's a bit of inverted snobbery there. | *Looking-glass self* – doesn't want to be seen as status-seeking<br>Positioning himself as 'superior' because he isn't status conscious? |
| *ST: Could you explain what you mean and the difference between what you think others think and what you think? What do you dislike about how others see it?*<br>G: Well anybody who wears a smart suit likes to call himself a professional. It's a word that gets bandied about a lot and loses a lot of real meaning, which is used as a kind of status symbol to say that I am something better than you. | Front – suit as insignia or rank; not 'real' professionalism<br>*Looking-glass self* − managing impressions to avoid being seen as that kind of professional<br>Front – used to stigmatise others |
| *ST: So you think it's often used as a way position yourself above other people?*<br>G: I think so, certainly in my experience. I worked in IT for many years before teaching and the amount of pseudo professionalism that you find there. | *Looking-glass self*; doesn't want to be stigmatised as 'pseudo' |
| *ST: How do you see yourself fitting into HE as a professional?*<br>G: At the moment I only have a first degree so I'm not the best qualified. Universities by their nature are very very status conscious – you need to have lots of pieces of paper – so I'm at the very bottom at the end of the scale, and I'll accept that; I don't mind that. I don't really care about that as long as I'm enjoying what I'm doing. Maybe one day I will | *Looking-glass self*<br>Marginalised by lack of qualifications – insignia of rank at universities<br>Managing impressions – teacher identity is positioned as more important than status |

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| progress, I'm certainly taking one or two steps in that direction. And when I have one or two more scraps of paper to wave about, then perhaps I can look down on other people instead of them looking down on me. I don't think it's going to make a scrap of difference how many bits of paper I have or haven't got to how good or bad I am. | Stigmatised by lack of 'front' in the form of 'bits of paper'. *Looking-glass self* view that others look down on him because of this.<br>Impression management – 'you think I'm lesser because of my qualifications but they won't make any difference' – in response to looking -glass construction |
| *ST: How do you see yourself fitting into the EAP profession?*<br>G: I'm not quite sure what you're getting at there. Well there are some bits of EAP which I enjoy perhaps more than others. We're not supposed to be like that, of course; we're supposed to be very professional. I always enjoy doing the reading and writing elements of EAP, and I always seem to do that quite well. I seem to do well with one-to-one sessions with students. I think one day I'd like to progress a bit beyond the classroom and perhaps do a bit of mentoring. | *Looking-glass self*<br><br>Effective teacher identity |
| *ST: There's a lot of talk about the status of EAP practitioners. How do you see it?*<br>G: Well really, we're only teachers. We're not in the same league as a university lecturer. We're not there to impart bodies of knowledge. We're language teachers really. And language teaching is acquiring a skill not imparting lots of knowledge in any way. I think EAP tries to raise itself to that kind of level and I think that's a bit of nonsense. | *Looking-glass self – only* teachers; stigmatised identity<br>Impression management – doesn't want to be seen as status seeking – alignment with 'in-group'<br>Language not viewed as knowledge – language/content dichotomy (cf Turner) |
| *ST: Would you say the status of EAP teachers is lower than lecturers?*<br>G: That's the way I see them. Maybe one day somebody's going to tell me that they're equal, that they're on a par. If that's true then why? | Stigmatised identity – positions self as inferior<br>Collective 'we'? Why does he use 'they' for EAP teachers? Does he not position himself as one? Is it just the wording of my question? |

## APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

University of Roehampton London

### ETHICS COMMITTEE

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Title of Research Project:** An enquiry into English for Academic Purposes practitioners' views about their professional identities within higher education

**Brief Description of Research Project:**

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) practitioners face a number of issues related to their status within higher education, their professional qualifications and the nature of what they teach. These issues have implications for the professional identity of EAP practitioners. Therefore, the aim of this study is to gain a better understanding of how those working in EAP perceive their own professional roles and status.

I will be interviewing fellow EAP practitioners to find out how they view themselves, and their own professional identity. A total of 10-15 EAP practitioners will be interviewed one-to-one either in a quiet room at a mutually convenient location, or via Skype (if acceptable). The interviews will take about an hour each, but participants may be asked for a second meeting to follow up on what was discussed. Interviews will be audio recorded to enable the interviewer to participate in the discussion while keeping a record of what is said.

Right to withdraw

If you agree to take part, you have the right to withdraw from participation in the whole study, or any part of it, at any point without giving a reason. You can also request for your data to be withdrawn at any time after participation.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All data will be held securely in password protected computer files and locked filing cabinets. No one outside of the research team will have access to your individual data and anonymity will be protected at all times. Signed consent forms will be kept separately from all other data. Your identity will not be passed on to anyone who is not involved in this study and will be protected in the publication of any findings.

If you would like to take part, please sign the consent statement below.

**Investigator Contact Details:**

Sarah Taylor
Department of Media, Culture and Language
University of Roehampton
Roehampton Lane
London
SW16 3DU
sarah.taylor@roehampton.ac.uk
020-8392-3038

**Consent Statement:**

I agree to take part in this research and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point without giving a reason, although if I do so I understand that my data might still be used in a collated form. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence by the investigator and that my identity will be protected in the publication of any findings, and that data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and with the University's Data Protection Policy.

Name …….

Signature ……

Date ……

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Research (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies).

**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

Dr Anthony Thorpe
School of Education
University of Roehampton
Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5PJ
a.thorpe@roehampton.ac.uk
020 8392 3895

**Head of Research Contact Details:**

Prof. Andy Stables
School of Education
University of Roehampton
Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
020 8392 3865

## APPENDIX F: PARTICIPANT DEBRIEFING FORM

University of Roehampton London

# Participant debriefing form

**Research Project:** An enquiry into English for Academic Purposes practitioners' views about their professional identities within higher education

Thank you very much for participating in my research. Your involvement is very much appreciated. I would like to remind of you of the following:

Right to withdraw
You have the right to withdraw from participation in the whole study, or any part of it, at any point without giving a reason. You can also request for your data to be withdrawn at any time after participation.

Confidentiality and anonymity
All data will be held securely in password protected computer files and locked filing cabinets. No one outside of the research team will have access to your individual data and anonymity will be protected at all times. Signed consent forms will be kept separately from all other data. Your identity will not be passed on to anyone who is not involved in this study and will be protected in the publication of any findings.

Ethical concerns
Interview research may involve a number of unanticipated risks. Please be aware that you may be affected by the following:

- Interviewees sometimes find it distressing to talk about negative experiences. If you were distressed by any of the topics discussed in the interview, you may find it useful to contact the counselling support offered by your place of work.
- You may have become concerned about problems you have experienced at work. If so, you may find it useful to approach suitable support at your university, such as your employment union or a Human Resources representative
- The interviewer is likely to have referred to you by your real name during the interview, but this will be replaced by a pseudonym during transcription to preserve your anonymity
- If you change your mind about something you said, you have the right to retract any statements you have made as long as you inform me before publication

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation or any other queries please raise this with the investigator. However, if you would like to contact an independent party please contact the Head of Research (or if the researcher is a student you can also contact the Director of Studies.)


**Director of Studies Contact Details:**

Dr Anthony Thorpe
School of Education
University of Roehampton
Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5PJ
a.thorpe@roehampton.ac.uk
020 8392 3895

**Head of Research Contact Details:**

Prof. Andy Stables
School of Education
University of Roehampton
Roehampton Lane
London SW15 5PJ
andrew.stables@roehampton.ac.uk
020 8392 3865


Thank you for your time, and I hope you enjoyed being involved in this project.


Sarah Taylor
sarah.taylor@roehampton.ac.uk
020 8392 3038